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THE DOG BRINGS THE SLEEPING PRINCESS TO THE SOLDIER

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Favourite Fairy Tales

HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN

With Four Illustrations in Colour

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BLACKIE AND SON LIMITED
LONDON GLASGOW AND BOMBAY

*Printed in Great Britain by
Blackie & Son, Limited, Glasgow*

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Hans Christian Andersen was born in Odense, Denmark, in 1805, the son of a poor shoemaker. Left an orphan at the age of eleven, he had a rather chequered youth, but managed to obtain some education at a grammar school. He published his first book in 1822, and made a decided hit in 1835 with a novel, *The Improvisatore*. Other novels followed, including *O. T.* (1836), *Only a Fiddler* (1837), *The Two Baronesses* (1849), and *To Be or Not To Be* (1857), but his European fame rests upon his fairy tales, which are assured of immortality. The first series of these appeared in 1835, and the last in 1872. He died near Copenhagen in 1875.

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FAVOURITE FAIRY TALES

THE FIR-TREE

FAR away in the deep forest there once grew a pretty little Fir-Tree. The sun shone full upon him ; the breezes played freely round him ; and near him grew many other fir-trees, some older, some younger ; but the little Fir-Tree was not happy, for he was always longing to be tall like the others. He thought not of the warm sun and the fresh air ; he cared not for the merry, prattling peasant children who came to the forest to look for strawberries and raspberries. Sometimes, after having filled their pitchers, or threaded the bright berries on a straw, they would sit down near the little Fir-Tree and say, "What a pretty little tree this is !" and then the Fir-Tree would feel more unhappy than ever.

"Oh that I were as tall as the other trees," sighed the little Fir, "then I should spread my branches on every side, and my top should look out over the wide world ! The birds would build their nests among my branches, and when the wind blew I should bend my head so grandly, just as the others do !" He had no pleasure in the sunshine, in the song of the birds, or in the rosy clouds that sailed over him every morning and evening.

In winter, when the ground was covered with the white glistening snow, a hare would sometimes come scampering along, and jump right over the little Tree's head ; and then how miserable he felt ! However, two winters passed away, and by the third the Tree was so tall that the hare was obliged to run round it. "Oh, if I could but grow and grow, and become tall and old !" thought the Tree. "That is the only thing in the world worth living for."

The wood-cutters came in the autumn and felled some of

the largest of the trees. This happened every year, and our young Fir, who was by this time a good height, shuddered when he saw those grand trees fall with a crash to the earth. Their branches were then cut off; the stems looked so terribly naked and lanky that they could hardly be recognised. They were laid one upon another in waggons, and horses drew them away, far, far away from the forest.

Where could they be going? What would happen to them? The Fir-Tree wished very much to know, so in the spring, when the swallows and the storks returned, he asked them if they knew where the felled trees had been taken.

The swallows knew nothing; but the stork looked thoughtful for a moment, then nodded his head and said, "Yes, I believe I have seen them! As I was flying from Egypt I met many ships; and they had fine new masts that smelt like fir. I have little doubt that they were the trees that you speak of. They were stately, very stately, I assure you!"

"Oh that I too were tall enough to sail upon the sea! Tell me what is this sea, and what does it look like?"

"That," said the stork, "would take too long!" and away he stalked.

"Rejoice in your youth!" said the sunbeams; "rejoice in your fresh youth, in the young life that is within you!"

And the wind kissed the Tree, and the dew wept tears over him, but the Fir-Tree did not understand them.

When Christmas drew near, many quite young trees were felled, some of them not so tall as the young Fir-Tree who was always longing to be away. These young trees were chosen for their beauty. Their branches were not cut off. They too were laid in a waggon, and horses drew them away from the forest.

"Where are they going?" asked the Fir-Tree. "They are no taller than I; indeed, one of them is much less. Why do they keep all their branches? Where can they be going?"

"We know! We know!" twittered the sparrows. "We peeped through the windows in the town below! We know

where they are gone. Oh, you cannot think what honour is done to them! We looked through the windows and saw them planted in a warm room, and decked out with such beautiful things: gilded apples, sweetmeats, playthings, and hundreds of bright candles!"

"And then?" asked the Fir-Tree, trembling in every branch; "and then? What happened then?"

"Oh, we saw no more. That was beautiful, beautiful beyond compare!"

"Is such a glorious lot to be mine?" cried the delighted Fir-Tree. "This is far better than sailing over the sea. How I long for the time. Oh that Christmas were come! I am now tall and have many branches, like those trees that were carried away last year. Oh that I were even now in the waggon! that I were in the warm room, honoured and adorned! and then—yes, then, something still better will happen, else why should they take the trouble to decorate me? It must be that something still greater, still more splendid, must happen—but what? Oh I suffer, I suffer with longing! I know not what it is that I feel."

"Rejoice in our love!" said the air and the sunshine. "Rejoice in your youth and your freedom!"

But rejoice he would not. He grew taller every day. In winter and in summer he stood there clothed in green, dark green foliage. The people that saw him said, "That is a beautiful tree!" And next Christmas he was the first that was felled. The axe cut through the wood and pith, and the Tree fell to the earth with a deep groan. The pain was so sharp he felt faint. He quite forgot to think of his good fortune, he felt so sorry at having to leave his home in the forest. He knew that he would never see again those dear old comrades, or the little bushes and flowers that had flourished under his shadow, perhaps not even the birds. Neither did he find the journey by any means pleasant.

The Tree first came to himself when, in the courtyard to which he had been taken with the other trees, he heard a man say, "This is a splendid one, the very thing we want!"

Then came two smartly-dressed servants, and carried the Fir-Tree into a large and handsome drawing-room. Pictures

hung on the walls, and on the mantel-piece stood large Chinese vases with lions on the lids. There were rocking-chairs, silken sofas, tables covered with picture-books, and toys. The Fir-Tree was placed in a large tub filled with sand; but no one could know that it was a tub, for it was hung with green cloth and stood on a rich, gaily-coloured carpet. Oh, how the Tree trembled! What was to happen next? Some young ladies, helped by servants, began to adorn him. On some branches they hung little nets cut out of coloured paper, every net filled with sugar plums; from others gilded apples and walnuts were hung, looking just as if they had grown there; and hundreds of little wax tapers, red, blue, and white, were placed here and there among the branches. Dolls that looked almost like men and women—the Tree had never seen such things before—seemed dancing to and fro among the leaves, and high up, on the top of the tree, was fastened a large star of gold tinsel. This was indeed splendid, splendid beyond compare.

"This evening," they said, "this evening it will be lighted up."

"Would that it were evening," thought the Tree. "Would that the lights were kindled, for then,—what will happen then? Will the trees come out of the forest to see me? Will the sparrows fly here and look in through the window-panes? Shall I stand here adorned both winter and summer?"

He thought much of it. He thought till he had barkache with longing, and barkaches with trees are as bad as headaches with us.

The candles were lighted—oh, what a blaze of splendour! The Tree trembled in all his branches so that a candle caught one of the twigs and set it on fire. "Oh dear!" cried the young ladies, and put it out at once.

So the Tree dared not tremble again: he was so fearful of losing any of his beautiful ornaments. He felt bewildered by all this glory and brightness. And now, all of a sudden, both folding-doors were flung open, and a troop of children rushed in as if they had a mind to jump over him; the older people followed more quietly. The little ones stood quite

silent, but only for a moment. Then they shouted with delight. They shouted till the room rang again; they danced round the Tree, and one present after another was torn down.

"What are they doing?" thought the Tree. "What will happen now?" The candles' burnt down to the branches, and as each burnt down it was put out. The children were given leave to strip the Tree. They threw themselves on him till all his branches creaked; and had he not been fastened with the gold star to the ceiling he would have been overturned.

The children danced about with their beautiful playthings. No one thought of the Tree any more except the old nurse. She came and peeped among the branches, but it was only to see if, perchance, a fig or an apple had been left among them.

"A story! a story!" cried the children, pulling a little, fat man towards the Tree. "It is pleasant to sit under the shade of green boughs," said he, sitting down; "besides, the tree may be benefited by hearing my story. But I shall only tell one tale. Would you like to hear about Ivedy Avedy? or about Humpty Dumpty, who fell downstairs, and yet came to the throne and won the Princess?"

"Ivedy Avedy!" cried some; "Humpty Dumpty!" cried others. There was a great uproar. The Fir-Tree alone was silent, thinking to himself, "Ought I to make a noise as they do? or ought I to do nothing at all?" For he most certainly was one of the company, and had done all that had been required of him.

And the little, fat man told the story of Humpty Dumpty who fell downstairs, and yet came to the throne and won the Princess. And the children clapped their hands and called out for another; they wanted to hear the story of Ivedy Avedy also, but they did not get it. The Fir-Tree stood meanwhile quite silent and thoughtful; the birds in the forest had never related anything like this. "Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet was raised to the throne and won the Princess! Yes, yes, strange things come to pass in the world!" thought the Fir-Tree, who believed

it must all be true, because such a pleasant man had told it. "Who knows but I, too, may fall downstairs and win a princess?" And he thought with delight of being next day again decked out with candles and playthings, gold and fruit. "To-morrow I will not tremble," thought he. "I will thoroughly enjoy my splendour. To-morrow I shall hear again the story of Humpty Dumpty, and perhaps also that about Ivedy Avedy." And the Tree mused upon this all night.

In the morning the maids came in. "Now begins my state anew!" thought the Tree. But they dragged him out of the room, up the stairs, and into a garret, and there thrust him into a dark corner where not a ray of light could enter. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought the Tree. "What am I to do here? What shall I hear in this place?" And he leant against the wall, and thought, and thought. And he had plenty of time for thinking it over; for day after day and night after night passed away, and yet no one ever came into the room. At last somebody did come in, but it was only to push some old trunks into the corner. The Tree was now entirely hidden from sight and apparently quite forgotten.

"It is now winter," thought the Tree. "The ground is hard and covered with snow; they cannot plant me now, so I am to stay here in shelter till the spring. Men are so thoughtful! I only wish it were not so dark and so lonely!"

"Squeak! squeak!" cried a little mouse, just then gliding forward. Another followed; they snuffed about the Fir-Tree, and then slipped in and out among the branches.

"It is horribly cold!" said a little mouse; "or it would be quite comfortable here. Don't you think so, you old Fir-Tree?"

"I am not old," said the Fir-Tree; "there are many who are much older than I."

"How came you here?" asked the mice, "and what do you know?" They were most uncommonly inquisitive. "Tell us about the most delightful place on earth! Have you ever been there? Have you been into the store-room,

where cheeses lie on the shelves, and hams hang from the ceiling; where one can dance over tallow candles; where one goes in thin and comes out fat?"

"I know nothing about that," said the Tree, "but I know the forest, where the sun shines and where the birds sing!" And then he spoke of his youth and its pleasures. The little mice had never heard anything like it before. They listened very closely and said, "Well, to be sure! How much you have seen! How happy you have been!"

"Happy!" said the Fir-Tree, in surprise, and he thought a moment over all that he had been saying,—“yes, on the whole those were pleasant times!” He then told them about the Christmas Eve when he had been dressed up with cakes and candles.

"Oh!" cried the little mice, "how happy you have been, you old Fir-Tree!"

"I am not old at all!" returned the Fir. "It was only this winter that I left the forest; I am just in the prime of life!"

"How well you can talk!" said the little mice, and the next night they came again and brought with them four other little mice, who wanted also to hear the Tree's history. And the more the Tree spoke of his youth in the forest, the more clearly he remembered it: "Yes," said he, "those were pleasant times! but they may come back, they may come back! Humpty Dumpty fell downstairs, and yet for all that he won the Princess; perhaps I, too, may win a princess!" And then the Fir thought of a pretty little delicate birch that grew in the forest, a real, and, to the Fir-Tree, a very lovely princess.

"Who's Humpty Dumpty?" asked the mice. In answer, the Fir told the tale. He could remember every word of it perfectly; and the little mice were ready to jump with joy. Next night more mice came; and on Sunday there came also two rats. The rats, however, did not find the story was at all amusing, and this annoyed the little mice, who, after hearing their opinion, could not like it so well either.

"Do you know only that one story?" asked the rats.

"Only that one!" answered the Tree. "I heard it on

the happiest evening of my life, though I did not then know how happy I was."

"It is a miserable story! Do you know none about pork and tallow? No store-room story?"

"No," said the Tree.

"Well, then, we have heard enough of it!" returned the rats, and they went away.

The mice, too, never came again. The Tree sighed, "It was pleasant when those busy little mice sat round me, listening to my words. Now that, too, is past! However, I shall have pleasure in remembering it, when I am taken from this place."

But when would that be? One morning, people came and routed out the lumber-room. The trunks were taken away: the Tree, too, was dragged out of the corner. They threw him on the floor, but one of the servants picked him up and carried him downstairs. Once more he beheld the light of day. "Now life begins again!" thought the Tree. He felt the fresh air, the warm sunbeams—he was out in the court. All happened so quickly that the Tree quite forgot to look at himself,—there was so much to look at all around. The court joined a garden. Everything was so fresh and blooming: roses so bright and so fragrant clustered round the trellis-work, the lime-trees were in full blossom, and the swallows flew backwards and forwards, twittering.

"I shall live! I shall live!" He was filled with delight and hope. He tried to spread out his branches; but alas! they were all dried up and yellow. He was thrown down on a heap of weeds and nettles. The star of gold tinsel that had been left on his crown now sparkled in the sunshine. Some children were playing in the court, the same merry youngsters who at Christmas-time had danced round the Tree. One of the youngest of them saw the gold star, and ran to tear it off.

"Look at this, still fastened to the ugly old Christmas Tree!" cried he, trampling upon the boughs till they broke under his boots.

And the Tree looked on the flowers of the garden now blooming in the freshness of their beauty; he looked upon

himself, and he wished from his heart that he had been left to wither alone in the dark corner of the lumber-room. He called to mind his happy forest life, the merry Christmas Eve, and the little mice who had listened so eagerly when he related the story of Humpty Dumpty.

"Past, all past!" said the poor Tree. "Had I but been happy, as I might have been! Past, all past!"

And the servant came and cut the Tree into small pieces; heaped them up, and set fire to them. And the Tree groaned deeply, and every groan sounded like a little explosion. The children all ran up to the place and jumped about in front of the blaze. But at each of those heavy groans the Fir-Tree thought of a bright summer's day, of Christmas Eve, or of Humpty Dumpty, the only story that he knew and could tell. And at last the Tree was burned.

The boys played about in the court. On the bosom of the youngest sparkled the gold star that the Tree had worn on the happiest evening of his life; but that was past, and the Tree was past and the story also, past! past! for all stories must come to an end some time or other.

THE SWINEHERD

THERE was once a poor Prince, who had a kingdom. His kingdom was small, but was still large enough to marry upon; and he wished to marry.

His name was known far and wide; and there were a hundred princesses who would each have answered "Yes!" and "Thank you kindly!" if he had asked her to be his wife; but he wished to marry the Emperor's daughter.

It happened that on the grave of the Prince's father there grew a rose-tree—a most beautiful rose-tree. It blossomed only once in every five years, and even then it bore only one rose—but what a rose! It was so sweet that whoever breathed its scent forgot all cares and sorrows.

And further, the Prince had a nightingale, who could sing as though all sweet melodies dwelt in her little throat. So he put the rose and the nightingale into silver caskets, and sent them to the Princess.

The Emperor had them brought into a large hall, where the Princess was playing at "Visiting" with her maids of honour; and when she saw the caskets with the presents, she clapped her hands for joy.

"Oh, I do hope it is a little pussy-cat!" said she—but the rose-tree with its beautiful flower was brought out.

"Oh, how prettily it is made!" said all the court ladies.

"It is more than pretty," said the Emperor; "it is charming!"

But the Princess touched it, and was almost ready to cry.

"Pah! papa," said she, "it is not made at all; it is natural!"

And all the court ladies said, "Pah! it's a natural rose."

"Let us see what is in the other casket, before we get into a bad humour," said the Emperor. So the nightingale came forth, and sang so delightfully that at first no one could say anything ill-humoured of her.

"*Superbe ! charmant !*" cried the ladies ; for they all used to chatter French, each one worse than her neighbour.

"How the bird reminds me of the musical-box that belonged to our blessed Empress !" said an old knight. "Oh yes ! these are the same tones, the same phrasing."

"Yes ! yes !" said the Emperor, and he wept at the remembrance.

"I do hope that it is not a real bird," said the Princess.

"Yes, it is a real bird," said those who had brought it.

"Well, then, let it fly," said the Princess ; and she refused to see the Prince.

However, he was not to be discouraged. He daubed his face over brown and black, pulled his cap over his eyes, and knocked at the door.

"Good-day to my lord the Emperor !" said he. "Can I be taken into your service at the palace ?"

"Why, yes," said the Emperor. "I want some one to take care of the pigs, for we have a great many of them."

So the Prince was made "Imperial Swineherd." He had a dirty little room close by the pig-sties ; and there he sat the whole day, and worked. By the evening he had made a pretty little kitchen-pot with bells all round it. When the pot boiled, these bells tinkled in the most charming way, and played the old tune :

Ah ! my dearest Augustine,
All is gone, gone, gone !

But what was still more curious, whoever held his finger in the steam of the kitchen-pot immediately smelt all the dishes that were cooking on every hearth in the city.

Now the Princess happened to walk that way ; and when she heard the tune, she stood quite still, and seemed greatly pleased ; for it was the only piece she knew, and she played it with one finger.

"Why, there is my piece!" said the Princess. "That swineherd must have been well educated! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument."

So one of the ladies ran in; but she drew on wooden slippers first.

"What will you take for the kitchen-pot?" said the lady.

"Ten kisses from the Princess," said the swineherd.

"He is an impudent fellow!" said the Princess when she heard this, and she walked on. But when she had gone a little way, the bells tinkled so prettily that she had to stop.

"Stay," said the Princess. "Ask him if he will have ten kisses from the ladies of my court."

"No, thank you!" said the swineherd; "ten kisses from the Princess, or I keep the kitchen-pot myself."

"That must not be either!" said the Princess; "but do you all stand before me that no one may see us."

So the court ladies placed themselves in front of her, and spread out their dresses; the swineherd got ten kisses, and the Princess—the kitchen-pot.

That was delightful! the pot was boiling the whole evening, and the whole of the following day. They knew perfectly well what was cooking at every fire throughout the city, from the chamberlain's to the cobbler's. The court ladies danced, and clapped their hands.

The swineherd let not a day pass without making something. One day he made a rattle which, when it was swung round, played all the waltzes and jig tunes that have ever been heard.

"Ah, that is *superbe*!" said the Princess when she passed by. "I have never heard prettier compositions! Go in and ask him the price of the instrument; but mind, he shall have no more kisses!"

"He will have a hundred kisses from the Princess!" said the lady who had been to ask.

"I think he is out of his senses!" said the Princess, and walked on; but when she had gone a little way, she stopped again. "One must encourage the fine arts," said she. "I

am the Emperor's daughter. Tell him, he shall, as yesterday, have ten kisses from me, and may take the rest from the ladies of the court."

"Oh!—but we should not like that at all!" said they.

"What are you muttering?" asked the Princess. "If I can kiss him, surely you can!" So the ladies were obliged to go to him again.

"One hundred kisses from the Princess!" said he, "or I keep the rattle."

"Stand round us then!" said the Princess; and all the ladies stood round them whilst the kissing was going on.

"What can be the reason for such a crowd close by the pig-sties?" said the Emperor, who happened just then to step out on the balcony. He rubbed his eyes and put on his spectacles. "They are the ladies of the court; I must go down and see what they are about!"

The ladies were so much taken up with counting the kisses that they did not notice the Emperor. He rose on his tiptoes.

"What is all this?" said he, when he saw what was going on; and he boxed the Princess's ears, just as the swineherd was taking the eighty-sixth kiss.

"Begone!" said the Emperor, for he was very angry; and both Princess and swineherd were thrust out of the city.

The Princess wept, the swineherd scolded, and the rain poured down.

"Alas! unhappy creature that I am!" said the Princess. "If I had but married the handsome young Prince! Ah, how unfortunate I am!"

The swineherd went behind a tree, washed the dirt from his face, threw off his old clothes, and stepped forth in all his princely robes; he looked so noble that the Princess could not help bowing before him.

"I have come to despise you," said he. "You would not have an honourable Prince! You could not prize the rose and the nightingale, but you were ready to kiss the

swineherd for the sake of a trumpery plaything. You are rightly served."

He then went back to his own little kingdom, and shut the door of his palace in her face. Now she might well sing :

Ah ! my dearest Augustine,
All is gone, gone, gone !

THE ROSE-ELF

IN the middle of a garden grew a rose-tree covered with lovely roses, and in one of these, the loveliest of all, dwelt a little elf. He was so very little that no human eye could see him. He had a sleeping-room behind each rose-leaf. He was fair and slender as only a child can be, and had wings that reached from his shoulders to his feet. Oh! what a sweet odour there was in his chambers, and how clean and beautiful the walls were! They were the pale pink rose-leaves.

He spent the whole day basking in the warm sunshine, flying from flower to flower, dancing on the wings of flying butterflies, and reckoning how many steps it took him to run over all the roads and footpaths of a single lime-leaf; for what we call the veins of the leaf were to him roads and footpaths, and he found them almost endless. The sun set before he had ended his journey. He had set off too late.

It grew very cold; the dew fell fast, the wind blew, the best thing he could do was to hurry home. But though he made all the haste he could the roses were all closed; and he could not get in—not a single rose was open. The poor little elf was greatly frightened. He had never before been out in the night air, but had always slept sweetly and softly behind the warm rose-leaves. Certainly, this night would be the death of him!

At the other end of the garden he knew that there was an arbour of honeysuckles, whose flowers looked like great painted horns. So he made up his mind to get into one of these, and sleep there till morning. Accordingly, he flew to the spot. But hush!—there were two persons in the arbour

—a handsome young man and a beautiful girl. They sat close together, wishing that they might never need to part again: they loved each other so much, more than the best child can love his father and mother.

"And yet we must part!" said the young man. "Your brother hates us, and that is why he sends me far away on business over the mountains, and across the ocean. Farewell, my sweet bride, for surely you are my bride!"

Then they kissed each other, and the young girl wept, and gave him a rose; but before giving it to him she pressed on it a kiss so warm that the flower opened, and the little elf flew in and leant his head against the delicate, fragrant walls. He could hear distinctly the words, "Farewell, farewell!" and he felt that the rose was placed in the young man's bosom. Oh, how the heart was throbbing! The little elf could not sleep at all for hearing the beats. The rose was not suffered to remain long in its warm resting-place. The man soon took it out, and whilst walking alone through the dark wood he kissed the flower so often and so vehemently that our tiny elf was well-nigh squeezed to death. He could feel through the rose-leaves how the man's lips were burning, and the rose opened more and more, just as though the hot midday sun were shining upon it.

But there came another man through the wood, looking gloomy and wrathful. It was the beautiful girl's wicked brother. He drew out a sharp knife, and, while the lover was kissing the rose, stabbed him to the heart, cut off his head, and buried both head and body in the moist earth under a lime-tree.

"Now we are rid of him!" thought the wicked brother; "and he will never come back again. He was to have taken a long journey over the mountains and beyond the sea; men often lose their lives in travelling as he has done! He will never come back again, and my sister dare not question me about him."

So he scraped with his foot some withered leaves over the upturned earth, and then walked home through the darkness. But he did not go alone, as he thought; the tiny elf went with him, rolled up in a withered lime-leaf which had fallen

into the wicked man's hair while he was digging the grave. The man put on his hat, and then it was dark for our little elf, who was underneath, trembling with horror and indignation at the shameful deed he had witnessed.

In the early morning the wicked man reached his home. He took off his hat, and went into his sister's sleeping-room. The bright and beautiful girl lay there dreaming of him whom she loved so well, and who, she supposed, was now wandering far away across mountain and forest. Her wicked brother bent over her, and laughed a hateful laugh, a laugh like that of a fiend. The withered leaf fell out of his hair upon the counterpane, but he did not notice it, and went away intending to sleep a little himself in the early morning hours. The elf now glided out of the withered leaf, crept to the ear of the sleeping girl, and told her, as though in a dream, all about the horrible murder. He described to her the spot where her brother had slain her lover, and had buried the body, close under the lime-tree in full blossom, and added: "In token that all I have told you is not a mere dream, you shall find a withered leaf upon your bed when you awake."

Oh, what bitter tears she shed when she awoke and found the withered lime-leaf on her bed! But she dared not speak to any one of her great sorrow. The window was left open all day, so that the little elf could easily have flown out to the roses and other flowers in the garden; but he could not find it in his heart to leave one who was so unhappy. A monthly rose-tree stood at the window; he got into one of its flowers, and sat looking at the poor girl. Her brother often came into the room, and seemed very merry, but she dared not speak a word to him of her heart's sorrow.

As soon as it was night she stole out of the house, and going to the wood, to the place where the lime-tree grew, she swept away the dry leaves, and dug in the earth till she found the corpse of the murdered man. Oh, how she wept and prayed to God that she too might die soon!

Gladly would she have taken the body home with her, but that she could not do. So she took up the head, kissed the pale, cold lips and closed eyes, and shook the earth out

of the beautiful hair. "This I will keep!" said she, and covering the dead body afresh with earth, she returned home, taking with her the head and a little bough from a jasmine-tree that blossomed near the grave. When she reached home she fetched the largest flower-pot she could find, put into it the head of the dead man, covered it over with mould, and planted the slip of jasmine above it.

"Farewell, farewell!" whispered the little elf. He could no longer bear to witness so much misery, and he flew into the garden to his own rose. But he found it faded, and only a few pale leaves still clinging to the green hedge behind. "Alas! how quickly does everything good and beautiful pass away!" sighed the elf. At last he found another rose that would suit for his home, and laid himself down among its fragrant leaves. And he flew every morning to the window of the poor girl's room, and every morning he found her standing over the flower-pot weeping. Her salt tears fell upon the jasmine, and day by day, as she grew paler and paler, the plant grew fresher and greener. One little shoot after another pushed forth, and the delicate white buds unfolded into flowers. And she kissed the flowers; but her wicked brother mocked her, and asked her if she had lost her wits. He could not bear it, and he could not understand why she was always weeping over that jasmine. He did not know whose closed eyes were resting there, nor whose red lips were fading beneath the earth.

One day she leaned her head against the flower-pot, and the little rose-elf flew into the room and found her sleeping. He crept into her ear, and talked to her of what he had heard in the arbour on that sad evening, of the fragrance of the roses, and of the love that the flower-spirits bore her. She dreamed very sweetly, and while she was dreaming her life slipped away calmly and gently, and her spirit, now at perfect peace, was in heaven with him whom she had loved so dearly.

And the blossoms of the jasmine opened their large white bells, and sent forth a fragrance wonderfully sweet and strong; this was the only way in which they could bewail the dead.



"THE ROSE-ELF FLEW IN, FOLLOWED BY THE QUEEN-BEE AND HER
WHOLE SWARM"

But the wicked brother saw the beautiful, blooming tree, and considering it now his own, he took it away into his sleeping-room and placed it near the bed, for it was very beautiful and its fragrance was delightful. The little rose-elf followed it, flew from flower to flower, for in each flower there dwelt a little spirit, and to each he told of the murdered young man whose head was now dust with the dust under their roots, of the wicked brother and the heart-broken sister.

"We know it!" replied all the spirits of the flowers; "we know it! Have not we sprung from the eyes and lips of the murdered man? We know it, we know it!" And they all nodded their heads in the strangest manner.

The rose-elf could not understand how they could take it so quietly, and he flew away to the bees, who were gathering honey in the garden, and told the story to them. And the bees told their Queen, and she gave orders that next morning they should all go and kill the murderer.

That very same night, however—it was the first night after his sister's death—whilst the brother was asleep in the bed near which the jasmine-tree was placed, each little flower-cup opened, and out flew the flower-spirits, invisible, but armed each with a poisoned arrow. They first crept into his ear and made him dream of his sinful deed, and then flew through his parted lips, and stabbed him in the tongue with their poisonous shafts.

"Now we have avenged the dead!" said they, and they flew back into the white jasmine-cups.

After day had dawned, the bedroom window being suddenly flung open, the rose-elf flew in, followed by the Queen-bee and her whole swarm; they had come to sting the murderer to death. But he was already dead; some persons were standing round the bed, declaring, "The strong scent of the jasmines has killed him!"

The rose-elf then understood that the flower-spirits had taken vengeance on the murderer. He explained it to the Queen-bee, and she, with her whole swarm, buzzed round the flower-pot in token of approval. In vain did people try to drive them off. At last a man took up the flower-pot,

intending to carry it away, whereupon one of the bees stung him in the hand, so that the pot fell to the ground and broke in pieces.

All who were present then saw the beautiful curling hair of the murdered youth, and guessed that the dead man in the bed must be a murderer.

And the Queen-bee flew buzzing about in the garden, singing of the vengeance of the flowers, of the rose-elf, and how that behind the tiniest leaf there lurks a spirit who knows when crime is committed, and can punish the evil-doer.

THE STORY OF THE YEAR

It was far on in the month of January, and the snow was falling heavily. It whirled through the streets and lanes of the town; it plastered the window-panes; it fell in heaps from the roofs. Every one was in a hurry. The people rushed blindly on their way, ran against one another, caught one another by the arms to keep themselves from falling, and then sped on again. Coaches and horses looked as if they had been powdered with sifted sugar. The footmen stood with their backs turned to the carriages, so as not to face the wind, and the foot-passengers crept along in the shelter of these vehicles as they crawled slowly through the deep snow.

When the storm abated, a narrow pathway was swept clean in front of the houses, and when two people met on this they stood stock-still, neither being willing to step into the deep snow at the side to let the other pass. After a moment's motionless silence, as if by mutual agreement each sacrificed one leg, burying it in the snow-heap, and so passed on his way.

Towards evening the weather became better. The sky grew clear, and looked as if, where the snow had been swept away, it had become loftier and more transparent. The stars shone with fresh brightness and purity. It froze so hard that underfoot the snow crackled, and by dawn its surface had grown firm enough to support the sparrows that hopped upon it, searching for food on the pathway that had been swept. Poor, shivering little things! they found that there was hardly anything for them.

"Tweet! tweet!" said one to another. "They call this a new year! We might just as well have been content with the old, for this seems to me worse. I don't know how you feel, but I can assure you I am utterly miserable."

"You're quite right," said a shivering little sparrow, "and yet people fired off guns and made a great fuss to welcome in the New Year. They clapped their hands, threw their caps in the air, and seemed quite mad; they were so glad the old year was gone. I was glad too, for I hoped for warm weather; but it freezes harder, I think, than it did before. Surely people must have made a mistake in the time."

"That they have," said a white-headed old sparrow. "Men have a thing they call a Calendar, a contrivance of their own, and everything must be arranged according to it. But in some ways it's really too absurd; the year begins when Spring comes. Nature says so, and I trust Nature."

"But when will Spring come?" inquired the others.

"Spring will come when the stork returns," answered the old sparrow; "but then the movements of the stork are never quite certain, and here in town no one knows anything about them. In the country people know better. Shall we fly off to the country and wait there? At least we shall then be nearer the Spring."

"That's all very well," said another little bird, who for some time had been hopping about and chirping, but without saying anything worth repeating; "but I have found some comforts here in the town that I am afraid I should not find in the country. A family lives near this who have had the good sense to place three or four flower-pots against the wall of the courtyard, with their mouths to the wall and their bottoms pointing outwards. In these holes have been cut large enough for me to fly in and out; so in one pot my husband and I have built our nest, and there all our young ones, who have now flown away, were reared. Of course the family put the pots there that they might have the pleasure of seeing us; they could have had no other reason for doing so. It has pleased them, too, to scatter bread-crumbs for us, so that we have both food and shelter, and may consider ourselves very well off. So I think that my husband and I will stay where we are. There are some drawbacks, but all the same we will stay."

"Let us fly away into the country," cried the others,

"to see if the Spring is coming." So away they flew. In the country the weather was more severe and the cold some degrees stronger than in the town. Biting blasts blew across the snow-covered fields. The farmer, heavily clad and with thick woollen gloves on his hands, sat in his cart, the whip on his knees, and beat his arms across his breast to warm himself. The farm horses ran till they steamed. The crisp snow crackled beneath their feet, and the sparrows hopped in the wheel-ruts and shivered, crying "Tweet! tweet! when will the Spring come? It is very long in coming."

"Very long indeed," came far across the field the cry from the nearest snow-covered hill. It might have been an echo that they heard, or perhaps it was the cry of the wonderful old man who, regardless of wind and weather, sat there, high on a heap of snow. He was all in white, dressed, peasant-like, in a coat of coarse frieze. His face was pale, and he had long white hair and big blue eyes.

"Who is that old man?" asked the sparrows.

"I can tell you," said an old raven who was seated on the fence, and being wise enough to understand that in the sight of heaven we are all alike little birds, was not above speaking to common sparrows and giving them the information they asked. "I know who the old man is. It is the Winter, the old man of last year. He is not dead, though the calendar says he is; but is guardian for the little Prince Spring, who is coming. Yes, Winter still rules here. O-o! how the cold makes one shiver, my dears!"

"Isn't that what I told you?" said the smallest of the sparrows. "The Calendar is just a contrivance of man, and is not at all a natural one. On such subjects men should really consult us, who are by nature so much cleverer than they."

First one week passed, and then a second. The hard-frozen lake looked like a sheet of lead. A cold damp fog hung over the land. Silently, and in long rows, the great black crows flew about. It seemed as if all things were asleep. Then a sunbeam glided over the lake, causing it to shine like polished silver; but the snow on field and fell

did not glitter so brightly as before. Still the white form of Winter himself sat there, staring fixedly southwards. He did not see the snow carpet sinking into the ground, or the small green patches of grass coming into view here and there, or the sparrows that gathered on them in crowds.

"Tee-weet! tee-weet! Is Spring coming at last?" they twittered.

"The Spring!" The cry rung out o'er field and meadow, and through the dark-brown woods where the fresh green moss still brightened the tree trunks; and from the south came the first two storks flying through the air. On the back of each was a lovely little child, a boy and a girl. They greeted the earth with a kiss, and wherever their feet were set, the white flowers sprang up from beneath the snow. Hand in hand the two children went to the old ice-man Winter, threw their arms round him and clung to his breast. In a moment the three, and all the region round were shrouded in a dense damp mist, that like a thick black veil closed over all. Slowly the wind rose, until with blustering noise and sturdy thrusts it pushed away the mist. Then the sun shone out warmly; Winter himself had vanished, and the lovely children of Spring sat on the throne of the year. "That's what I call a New Year!" said each little sparrow. "Now we shall have our dues, and get some amends for what we suffered in winter."

Wherever the children wandered the green buds burst forth on the trees and bushes; the grass sprang up; and the cornfields grew greener, and more and more beautiful. The girl scattered flowers in her path. She held her apron in front of her. It was always full of flowers, that seemed to grow up in it, for the more flowers she strewed, the fuller her lap was. Eagerly she showered the snowy blossoms over apple-trees and peach-trees, so that even before their green leaves had come out, the trees stood forth in full beauty.

And the maiden clapped her hands and the boy clapped his, and flocks of birds came flying up no one knew from whence; and they all twittered and sang, "Spring has come!" How astonishingly beautiful everything was. Old



"STORK, STORK, FLY TO YOUR NEST"

dames crawled forth from their houses into the sunshine, and tripped joyously about, watching the golden blossoms that glittered everywhere in the fields, just as they used to when they were young. For them the world again grew young, and they said, "What splendid weather! What a glorious day!"

The forest still wore its dress of dark-green buds; but the fresh and fragrant thyme was already in bloom. Violets grew there in abundance; primroses and anemones came forth; and every blade of grass stood stiff and full of sap, making a lovely carpet on which one could not help sitting down. And there the children of Spring sat hand in hand, and sang and laughed, and grow and grew. A gentle shower fell upon them from the sky, but they did not notice it, for the raindrops and their tears of gladness were mingled. So the betrothed bride and bridegroom kissed each other, and in a moment all the woods were green.

Hand in hand the betrothed couple wandered forth, under the fresh canopy of leaves, through the openings in which the sunbeams gleamed in ever-changing and varying hues. What virgin purity! what refreshing balm there was in the soft young leaves! Merrily laughed the clear brooks and the streams as they slid between the green velvety rushes, or rippled over the many-coloured pebbles. All Nature cried aloud, "There is plenty, and plenty there shall always be!" And the cuckoo sang, and the lark carolled, for now it was the beautiful Spring.

Days and weeks passed, and the heat steadily increased. The warm air waved the corn which grew more and more golden. The great green leaves of the white water-lily were spread over the glassy surface of the woodland lake, and under their shadows the fishes played. In a sheltered spot in the woods, lit up by the sunlight, stood a farmhouse. The heat of the sun's beams made the roses bloom on the walls and ripened the berries that hung, black and juicy, on the heavily-laden cherry-trees. Here sat Summer's charming wife, she whom we have seen as child and as bride. She was gazing fixedly at the gathering clouds, that in dense black mountain-like masses kept rolling up

higher and higher their ever-changing forms. They came up from three sides, ever growing greater and greater, and like an inverted rolling sea swooped down on the forest; where, as if by magic, all was silence. Every breeze was stilled; every bird was mute; all Nature stood gravely expectant; but in the highways and byways travellers on foot and in vehicles were hurrying to get under shelter. Then came a gleam of light, as if the sun had burst out flaming, dazzling, all-consuming—and the darkness returned again with the rolling thunder-crash. Down came the rain in torrents. One moment it was perfectly dark; the next the light was blinding. Now the silence was so intense it could be felt; in an instant the din was deafening. On the moor the young brown reeds swung to and fro in long waves; the forest boughs were hidden in a watery mist; the darkness came and was ploughed through by the light, and the deep silence was broken by the crashing roar. The grass and the corn lay beaten down and sodden-looking, as if they could never again raise themselves. In a little the rain began to fall more gently. The sun broke forth, and the raindrops glistened on leaf and stem like pearls. The birds sang in the meadows, the fish played over the surface of the water, the gnats danced in the sunbeams, and on a rock by the rolling salt-sea waves sat Summer himself, a vigorous, strong-limbed man, with long, dripping hair. Refreshed by his cold bath, he was basking in the warm sunshine. About him all Nature refreshed rose luxuriant, strong, and beautiful; it was summer, warm, charming summer. Delightfully sweet was the smell wafted from the clover field, where the bees swarmed round the ruined tower and the bramble crawled over the hearth-stone which, washed by the rain, shone in the sunshine; while thither flew the Queen-bee with her swarm, and made ready wax and honey. Summer and his buxom dame hardly observed these things, for to them the earth stood adorned with the offerings of Nature. The evening sky gleamed like gold. No minster dome ever shone so brightly; and between the red evening and the blushing dawn the pale moon shed her light. It was summer!

Days and weeks passed. In the cornfields the reapers' bright sickles flashed; the apple-tree branches drooped under their heavy load of golden fruit. The hops smelt delightfully and hung down in heavy clusters; and under the hazel-bushes, where the nuts grew in great bunches, rested a man and a woman, Summer and his sober spouse.

"What wealth," said she, "has been gathered around us, all homelike and good. And yet I know not why, I have an indescribable longing for peace, for rest. Now they have already begun to plough the fields again! More and ever more the people long for gain. Lo! the storks, the birds from Egypt, that carried us through the air, are flocking together, and, at a short distance behind, are following the plough. Do you remember how as children we came to this Northern land, and brought with us the flowers, and the cheerful sunshine, and the green woods? The winds have dealt harshly with them; they are grown brown and dark like the trees of the South; but, unlike them, they bear no golden fruit."

"Do you wish to see the golden fruit?" said Summer. "Be glad then." So saying he raised his arm and the forest leaves arrayed themselves in red and gold, and the woodlands grew splendid with colour. The rose-bushes glowed with their scarlet hips; the elder branches hung heavily weighed down with their dark-brown berries; the wild chestnuts dropped ripe from their dark-green shells, and in the woodland the violets bloomed for the second time.

But the Queen of the Year grew more and more silent and pale. "It grows cold," said she. "The night brings the damp mists. I long for the land of my childhood."

Then she saw the storks, one and all, fly away, and she stretched forth her hands towards them. She gazed at the nests, standing up there empty. In one grew a long-stalked corn-flower; in another a yellow mustard-seed, as though the nest had been put there just for its comfort and protection.

"Tweet! tweet!" said the sparrows as they flew up into the nest of the stork. "Where have the masters of the nest gone? They could not stand it when it grew windy,

we suppose, and so they have left the country. We wish them a pleasant journey."

The forest leaves grew yellower and yellower, and fell one after another. The winds of autumn howled. The year was now far advanced, and on the yellow fallen leaves sat the Queen of the Year, and gazed with gentle eyes at a gleaming star, while by her stood her husband. A blast swept through the leaves, which fell in a shower, and the Queen of the Summer had vanished; but a butterfly, the last of the year, fluttered through the cold air.

The damp fogs came. An ice-wind blew, and the darkness of the longest night drew near. With snow-white locks the Ruler of the Year appeared; but he himself did not know that they were white. A thin snow-covering was spreading itself over the green fields, and he thought the whiteness of his head due to the snow that fell from the sky. The church-bells rang out their Christmas chimes, and the Ruler of the Year said, "The bells are ringing for the birth of the Year. The new Lord of the Year will soon be born, and I, like my wife, shall go to rest, to rest in yon light-giving star!"

In the fresh green wood the while stood the Christmas-angel, and consecrated the young trees that were to adorn his festival. "May there be mirth and joy in the rooms and under the green boughs," said the Ruler of the Old Year. In a short time he had changed to a very old man with snow-white hair. "My resting-time draws nigh. The Year's young couple will soon claim my crown and sceptre!"

"The watch is still thine!" said the Christmas-angel. "Thou art on guard, and thy rest is not yet! Let the snow warmly cover the young seed. Suffer another to be worshipped while thou art still Lord. Bear being forgotten while thou still livest. The hour of thy release will come with the Spring."

"When does Spring come?" asked Winter.

"It will come when the storks return," answered the Angel.

On a drift on the snowy hills, where the Winter before had sat and gazed, Winter was seated staring southwards.

His locks were white, his beard like snow; his body bent and chilled and smitten with years, but strong as the winter blasts, and hard as a rock. The ice roared, the crisp snow crackled, the skaters skimmed hither and thither over the smooth lakes; while crows and ravens showed up well against the white ground. No word broke the silence; and in the calm air Winter clenched his fists and the ice lay fathom-thick between land and land.

Then the sparrows came again out of the town and asked, "Who is that old man?" and the raven still sat there, and answered their questions, and said, "It is Winter, the Old Man of last year. He is not dead though the Calendar says he is; but he is the guardian of the coming Spring."

"When will Spring come?" chirped the sparrows. "Then we shall have a fine time of it and be better off in every way. The old times are no good."

Deep in thought, Winter gazed on the dark leafless woods, where the graceful forms and curves of each tree and branch showed; and while he slept the icy mists sank down from the clouds, and the old Ruler dreamt of his youth and of his manhood; and at the break of day the whole forest sparkled with the hoar-frost. This was Winter's summer-dream. Soon the sun shook the hoar-frost from the boughs.

"When will Spring come?" twittered the sparrows.

"Spring!" rang like an echo from the hills on which the snow still lay. The sun shone warmer. The snow melted. The birds sang, "Spring is coming." And, aloft, through the air came the first stork; the second followed; a lovely child sat on the back of each, and they settled down on the open field and kissed the earth, and kissed the silent Old Man, and like mists from the hill-tops he vanished away. The Story of the Year was finished.

"That's all very well," said the sparrows, "and it is very pretty, too; but it is not according to the Calendar, and therefore it must be wrong."

THE STORKS

ON the roof of a house, the last in a little village, a stork had built his nest. There sat the mother-stork with her four young ones, who all stretched out their little black bills, which had not yet become red. Not far off, on the top of the roof, erect and proud, stood the father-stork. He had drawn up one of his legs under him, being weary of standing on two. You might have thought that he was carved out of wood, he stood so motionless.

In the street below, a whole swarm of children were playing. When they saw the storks, one of the liveliest amongst them began to sing as much as he could remember of some old rhymes about storks, and he was soon joined by the others.

Stork, stork, fly to your nest ;
And give your tired long leg a rest.
There in stillness sits your mate
Watching her brood with care so great.
The first shall hang on gallows-tree ;
Of the second the end by fire shall be ;
The third upon a spit shall roast ;
And of shooting the fourth a marksman boast.

"Only listen to what the boys are singing," said the little storks ; "they say we shall be hanged and burnt !"

"Never mind," said the mother. "Don't listen to them, and it will do you no harm."

But the boys went on singing, and pointed their fingers at the storks. Only one little boy, called Peter, said it was a sin to mock and tease animals, and that he would have nothing to do with it.

The mother-stork again tried to comfort her little ones.

"Never mind," said she; "see how quietly your father is standing there, and upon one leg only."

"But we are so frightened!" said the young ones, drawing their heads down into the nest.

The next day, when the children were again playing together, and saw the storks, they began to sing—

The first shall hang on a gallows-tree ;
Of the second the end by fire shall be.

"And are we really to be hanged and burnt?" asked the young storks.

"No indeed!" said the mother. "You shall learn to fly: I will teach you myself. Then we can fly over to the meadow, and pay a visit to the frogs. They will bow to us in the water, and say, 'Croak, croak!' and then we shall eat them. Will not that be nice?"

"And what then?" asked the little storks.

"Then all the storks in the country will gather together, and the autumn manœuvres will begin. It is of the greatest importance that you should fly well then; for the general will stab to death with his bill every one who does not. So you must pay great attention when we begin to drill you, and learn very quickly. After the great review is over, we shall fly far, far away from here, over mountains and forests, to a warm country where we shall have nothing to do but eat frogs all the day long. And whilst we are so well off there, in this country not a single green leaf is left on the trees, and it is so cold that the clouds are frozen, and fall down upon the earth in little white pieces."—She meant snow, but she could not express herself more clearly.

"And will the naughty boys be frozen to pieces too?" asked the young storks.

"No, they will not be frozen to pieces; but they will be nearly as badly off as if they were. They will be obliged to crowd round the fire in their little dark rooms; while we shall be flying about in foreign lands, where there are beautiful flowers and warm sunshine."

Time passed, and the young storks grew so tall that when

they stood upright in the nest they could see the country around to a great distance.

"Now you must learn to fly!" said the mother one day; and accordingly, all the four young storks were obliged to come out on the top of the roof. Oh! how they trembled! And though they balanced themselves on their wings, they were very near falling.

"Only look at me," said the mother. "This is the way you must hold your heads; and you must place your feet so, —one, two! one, two! this will help you to get on." She flew a little way, and the young ones made an awkward spring after her; but, plump! down they fell; for their bodies were still too heavy.

"I will not fly," said one of the young ones, as he crept back into the nest. "I do not want to go to warm countries!"

"Do you want to be frozen to death during the winter? Shall the boys come, and hang, burn, or roast you? Wait a little, I will call them!"

"Oh no!" said the little stork; and again he began to hop about on the roof like the others. By the third day they could fly pretty well. The boys again came into the street, singing their favourite song—

Stork, stork, fly to your nest!

"Shall not we fly down and peck out their eyes?" said the young ones.

"No, leave them alone!" said the mother. "Attend to me; that is of much more importance! One, two, three, now to the right!—one, two, three, now to the left, round the chimney pot! That was very well. You managed your wings so neatly that I will permit you to come with me to-morrow to the marsh."

"All the same we shall take revenge upon those rude boys," said the young ones.

Of all the boys in the town, the one most bent on singing the song was the one who had begun it, a little urchin not more than six years old. The young storks indeed, fancied him a hundred years old, because he was bigger than either

their father or mother; and what should they know about the ages of children or of grown-up people! All their schemes of revenge were aimed at this little boy, for he had been the first to shout at them, and had continued to do so. The young storks were very angry about it, and the older they grew the angrier they were at being teased. Their mother, to pacify them, at last promised that they should be avenged, but not until the last day of their stay in that place.

"We must first see how you behave yourselves at the great review. If then you should fly badly, and the general should thrust his beak into your breast, the boys will, at least so far, be proved in the right. Let me see how well you will behave!"

"Yes, that you shall!" said the young ones. And now they really took great pains, practised every day, and at last flew so prettily that it was a pleasure to see them.

Autumn came, and all the storks assembled to make ready to fly together to warm countries for the winter. What a practising there was! Away they went over woods and fields, towns and villages, merely to see how well they could fly, for they had a long journey before them. The young storks did so well that they were pronounced "worthy of frogs and serpents," which was the highest character they could obtain.

"Now we will have our revenge!" said they.

"Very well!" said the mother. "I have been thinking what will be the best. I know where the pond is in which all the little human children lie until the storks come and take them to their parents. The pretty little things sleep and dream more sweetly than they will ever dream hereafter. All parents like to have a little child, and all children like to have a little brother or sister. We will fly to the pond and fetch one for each of the boys who has not sung that naughty song and made fun of the storks."

"But the naughty ugly boy who began the song first, what shall we do to him?" cried the young storks.

"In the pond there lies a little child who has dreamed away his life. We will take it home to the naughty boy, and he will weep because he has only a little dead brother.

But as to the good boy who said it was a sin to mock and tease animals, surely you have not forgotten him? We will bring him two little ones, a brother and a sister. And as this little boy's name is Peter, you too shall for the future be called 'Peter.'"

And it came to pass just as the mother said; and all the storks were called "Peter," and are still so called to this very day.

THE UGLY DUCKLING

How beautiful it was in the country! It was summer-time; the wheat was yellow, the oats were green, the hay was stacked up in the verdant meadows, and the stork strutted about on his long red legs, chattering in Egyptian, the language he had learned from his mother. The fields and meadows were skirted by thick woods, and in the midst of the woods lay a deep lake. Yes, it was indeed beautiful in the country! The sunshine fell warmly on an old country house, surrounded by deep canals, and from the walls down to the water's edge there grew large burdock-leaves, so high that children could stand upright among them without being seen. This place was as wild and lonely as the thickest part of the wood, and on that account a duck had chosen to make her nest there. She was sitting on her eggs; but the pleasure she had felt at first was now almost gone, because she had been there so long, and had so few visitors, for the other ducks preferred swimming about in the canals to climbing up the slippery banks and sitting gossiping with her.

At last the eggs began to crack, and one little head after another appeared. "Quack, quack!" said the duck, and all got up as well as they could, and peeped about from under the green leaves.

"How large the world is!" said the little ones.

"Do you think this is the whole of the world?" said the mother. "It stretches far away beyond the other side of the garden down to the pastor's field; but I have never been there. Are you all here?" And then she got up. "No, I have not got you all; the largest egg is still here. How long, I wonder, will this last? I am so weary of it!" And then she sat down again.

"Well! and how are you getting on?" asked an old duck, who had come to pay her a visit.

"This one egg keeps me so long," said the mother, "it will not break; but you should see the others! They are the prettiest little ducklings I have seen in all my days."

"Depend upon it," said the old duck, "it is a turkey's egg. I was cheated in the same way once myself, and I had such trouble with the young ones. They were so afraid of the water that I could not get them to go near it. I called and scolded, but it was all of no use. But let me see the egg. Ah yes! to be sure, that is a turkey's egg. Leave it, and teach the other little ones to swim."

"I will sit on it a little longer," said the duck. "I have been sitting so long, that a day or two more will not matter much."

"It is no business of mine," said the old duck, and away she waddled.

The great egg burst at last. "Peep, peep!" said the little one, and out it tumbled. But oh! how large and ugly it was! The duck looked at it. "That is a great, strong creature," said she, "none of the others are at all like it. Can it be a young turkey-cock? Well, we shall soon find out. Into the water it must go, though I should have to push it in myself."

The next day there was delightful weather, and the sun was shining warmly upon all the green leaves when mother-duck with her family went down to the canal. Splash! she went into the water. "Quack, quack!" cried she, and one duckling after another jumped in. The water closed over their heads, but all came up again, and swam quite easily. All were there, even the ugly grey one was swimming about with the rest.

"No, it is not a turkey," said the mother-duck; "only see how prettily it moves its legs, how upright it holds itself. It is my own child, and it is really very pretty when one looks more closely at it. Quack, quack! now come with me, I will take you into the world; but keep close to me, or some one may tread on you; and beware of the cat."

When they came into the duck-yard, two families were quarrelling about the head of an eel, which in the end was carried off by the cat.

"See, my children, such is the way of the world," said the mother-duck, whetting her beak, for she too was fond of roasted eels. "Now use your legs," said she, "keep together, and bow to the old duck you see yonder. She is the noblest born of them all, and is of Spanish blood, which accounts for her dignified appearance and manners. And look, she has a red rag on her leg; that is considered a special mark of distinction, and is the greatest honour a duck can have."

The other ducks who were in the yard looked at them and said aloud, "Only see! now we have another brood, as if there were not enough of us already. And fie! how ugly that one is; we will not endure it." And immediately one of the ducks flew at him, and bit him on the neck.

"Leave him alone," said the mother; "he is doing no one any harm."

"Yes; but he is so large, and so ungainly."

"Those are fine children that our good mother has," said the old duck with the red rag on her leg. "All are pretty except that one, who certainly is not at all well favoured. I wish his mother could improve him a little."

"Certainly he is not handsome," said the mother, "but he is a very good child, and swims as well as the others, indeed rather better. I think in time he will grow like the others, and perhaps will look smaller." And she stroked the duckling's neck, and smoothed his ruffled feathers. "Besides," added she, "he is a drake; I think he will be very strong; so he will fight his way through."

"The other ducks are very pretty," said the old duck. "Pray make yourselves at home, and if you find an eel's head you can bring it to me."

And accordingly they made themselves at home.

But the poor duckling, who had come last out of his egg-shell, and who was so ugly, was bitten, pecked, and teased by both ducks and hens. And the turkey-cock, who had come into the world with spurs on, and therefore

fancied he was an emperor, puffed himself up like a ship in full sail, and marched up to the duckling quite red with passion. The poor thing scarcely knew what to do; he was quite distressed because he was so ugly.

So passed the first day, and afterwards matters grew worse and worse. Even his brothers and sisters behaved unkindly, and were constantly saying, "May the cat take you, you ugly thing!" while his mother said she wished he had never been born. The ducks bit him, the hens pecked him, and the girl who fed the poultry kicked him. He ran through the hedge, and the little birds in the bushes were frightened and flew away. "That is because I am so ugly," thought the duckling, and ran on. At last he came to a wide moor, where lived some wild ducks. There he lay the whole night, feeling very tired and sorrowful. In the morning the wild ducks flew up, and then they saw their new companion. "Pray who are you?" asked they; and the duckling greeted them as politely as possible.

"You are really very ugly," said the wild ducks; "but that does not matter to us if you do not wish to marry into our family."

Poor thing! he had never thought of marrying. He only wished to lie among the reeds, and drink the water of the moor. There he stayed for two whole days. On the third day there came two wild geese, or rather goslings, for they had not been long out of their egg-shells, which accounts for their impertinence.

"Hark-ye," said they, "you are so ugly that we like you very well. Will you go with us and become a bird of passage? On another moor, not far from this, are some dear, sweet, wild geese, as lovely creatures as have ever said 'hiss, hiss.' It is a chance for you to get a wife; you may be lucky, ugly as you are."

Bang! a gun went off, and both goslings lay dead among the reeds. Bang! another gun went off, and whole flocks of wild geese flew up from the rushes. Again and again the same alarming noise was heard.

There was a great shooting party. The sportsmen lay in ambush all around; some were even sitting in the trees,

whose huge branches overshadowed the rushes. The dogs splashed about in the mud, bending the reeds and rushes in all directions. How frightened the poor little duck was! He turned away his head, thinking to hide it under his wing, and at the same moment a fierce-looking dog passed close to him, his tongue hanging out of his mouth, his eyes sparkling fearfully. His jaws were wide open. He thrust his nose close to the duckling, showing his sharp white teeth, and then splash, splash! he was gone—gone without hurting him.

"Well! let me be thankful," sighed the duckling. "I am so ugly that even a dog will not bite me."

And so he lay still though the shooting continued among the reeds. The noise did not cease till late in the day, and even then the poor little thing dared not stir. He waited several hours before he looked around him, and then hastened away from the moor as fast as he could. He ran over fields and meadows, though the wind was so high that he could hardly go against it.

Towards evening he reached a wretched little hut, so wretched that it knew not on which side to fall, and therefore remained standing. He noticed that the door had lost one of its hinges, and hung so much awry that there was a space between it and the wall wide enough to let him through. So, as the storm was becoming worse and worse, he crept into the room.

In this room lived an old woman, with her tom-cat and her hen. The cat, whom she called her little son, knew how to set up his back and purr. He could even throw out sparks when his fur was stroked the wrong way. The hen had very short legs, and was therefore called "Chickie Shortlegs"; she laid very good eggs, and the old woman loved her as her own child.

The next morning the cat began to mew and the hen to cackle when they saw the new guest.

"What is the matter?" asked the old woman, looking round. Her eyes were not good, so she took the duckling to be a fat duck who had lost her way. "This is a capital catch," said she. "I shall now have duck's eggs, if

it be not a drake. We must wait and see." So the duckling was kept on trial for three weeks; but no eggs made their appearance.

Now the cat was the master of the house, and the hen was the mistress, and they used always to say, "We and the world," for they imagined themselves to be not only the half of the world, but also by far the better half. The duckling thought it was possible to be of a different opinion, but that the hen would not allow.

"Can you lay eggs?" asked she.

"No."

"Well, then, hold your tongue."

And the cat said, "Can you set up your back? can you purr?"

"No."

"Well, then, you should have no opinion at all when sensible people are speaking."

So the duckling sat in a corner feeling very much dispirited till the fresh air and bright sunshine came into the room through the open door, and these gave him such a strong desire to swim that he could not help telling the hen.

"What ails you?" said the hen. "You have nothing to do, and therefore brood over these fancies; either lay eggs, or purr, then you will forget them."

"But it is so delicious to swim," said the duckling; "so delicious when the waters close over your head, and you plunge to the bottom."

"Well, that is a queer sort of pleasure," said the hen; "I think you must be crazy. Not to speak of myself, ask the cat—he is the wisest creature I know—whether he would like to swim, or to plunge to the bottom of the water. Ask your mistress: no one is cleverer than she. Do you think she would take pleasure in swimming, and in the waters closing over her head?"

"You do not understand me," said the duckling.

"What! we do not understand you! So you think yourself wiser than the cat and the old woman, not to speak of myself! Do not fancy any such thing, child, but be thankful for all the kindness that has been shown you."

Are you not lodged in a warm room, and have you not the advantage of society from which you can learn something? But you are a chatterbox, and it is wearisome to listen to you. Believe me, I wish you well. I tell you unpleasant truths, but it is thus that real friendship is shown. Come, for once give yourself the trouble either to learn to purr, or to lay eggs."

"I think I will take my chance and go out into the wide world again," said the duckling.

"Well, go then," said the hen.

So the duckling went away. He soon found water and swam on the surface and plunged beneath it; but all other animals passed him by, on account of his ugliness. The autumn came: the leaves turned yellow and brown; the wind caught them and danced them about; the air was very cold; the clouds were heavy with hail or snow, and the raven sat on the hedge and croaked. The poor duckling was certainly not very comfortable!

One evening, just as the sun was setting, a flock of large birds rose from the brushwood. The duckling had never seen anything so beautiful before; their plumage was of a dazzling white, and they had long, slender necks. They were swans. They uttered a singular cry, spread out their long, splendid wings, and flew away from these cold regions to warmer countries, across the sea. They flew so high, so very high! and the ugly duckling's feelings were very strange. He turned round and round in the water like a wheel, strained his neck to look after them, and sent forth such a loud and strange cry, that it almost frightened himself. Ah! he could not forget them, those noble birds! those happy birds! The duckling knew not what the birds were called, knew not whither they were flying, yet he loved them as he had never before loved anything. He envied them not. It would never have occurred to him to wish such beauty for himself. He would have been quite contented if the ducks in the duck-yard had but endured his company.

And the winter was so cold, so cold! The duckling had to swim round and round in the water, to keep it from

freezing. But every night the opening in which he swam became smaller and smaller; the duckling had to make good use of his legs to prevent the water from freezing entirely. At last, wearied out, he lay stiff and cold in the ice.

Early in the morning there passed by a peasant, who saw him, broke the ice in pieces with his wooden shoe, and carried the duckling home to his wife.

The duckling soon revived. The children would have played with him, but he thought they wished to tease him, and in his terror jumped into the milk-pail, so that the milk was splashed about the room. The good woman screamed and clapped her hands. He flew first into the tub where the butter was kept, and thence into the meal-barrel, and out again.

The woman screamed, and struck at him with the tongs; the children ran races with each other trying to catch him, and laughed and screamed likewise. It was well for him that the door stood open; he jumped out among the bushes into the new-fallen snow, and lay there as in a dream.

But it would be too sad to relate all the trouble and misery he had to suffer during the winter. He was lying on a moor among the reeds when the sun began to shine warmly again. The larks were singing, and beautiful spring had returned.

Once more he shook his wings. They were stronger than formerly, and bore him forward quickly; and, before he was well aware of it, he was in a large garden where the apple-trees stood in full bloom, where the syringas sent forth their fragrance, and hung their long green branches down into the winding canal. Oh! everything was so lovely, so full of the freshness of spring!

Out of the thicket came three beautiful white swans. They displayed their feathers so proudly, and swam so lightly, so lightly! The duckling knew the glorious creatures, and was seized with a strange sadness.

"I will fly to them, those kingly birds!" said he. 'They will kill me, because I, ugly as I am, have presumed to approach them; but it matters not. Better be killed by

them than be bitten by the ducks, pecked by the hens, kicked by the girl who feeds the poultry, and have so much to suffer during the winter!" He flew into the water, and swam towards the beautiful creatures. They saw him and shot forward to meet him. "Only kill me," said the poor duckling, and he bowed his head low, expecting death. But what did he see in the water? He saw beneath him his own form, no longer that of a plump, ugly grey bird—it was that of a swan!

It matters not to have been born in a duck-yard, if one has been hatched from a swan's egg.

The larger swans swam round him, and stroked him with their beaks, and he was very happy.

Some little children were running about in the garden. They threw grain and bread into the water, and the youngest exclaimed, "There is a new one!" The others also cried out, "Yes, a new swan has come!" and they clapped their hands, and ran and told their father and mother. Bread and cake were thrown into the water, and every one said, "The new one is the best, so young, and so beautiful!" and the old swans bowed before him. The young swan felt quite ashamed, and hid his head under his wing. He was all too happy, but still not proud, for a good heart is never proud.

He remembered how he had been laughed at and cruelly treated, and he now heard every one say he was the most beautiful of all beautiful birds. The syringas bent down their branches towards him, and the sun shone warmly and brightly. He shook his feathers, stretched his slender neck, and in the joy of his heart said, "How little did I dream of so much happiness when I was the ugly, despised duckling!"

THE NIGHTINGALE

THE palace of the Emperor of China was the most beautiful palace in the world. It was made entirely of fine porcelain, which was so brittle that whoever touched it had to be very careful.

The choicest flowers were to be seen in the garden ; and to the prettiest of these, little silver bells were fastened, in order that their tinkling might prevent any one from passing by without noticing them. Yes ! everything in the Emperor's garden was wonderfully well arranged ; and the garden itself stretched so far that even the gardener did not know the end of it. Whoever walked farther than the end of the garden, however, came to a beautiful wood with very high trees, and beyond that to the sea. The tall trees went down quite to the sea, which was very deep and blue, so that large ships could sail close under their branches ; and among the branches dwelt a nightingale, who sang so sweetly that even the poor fishermen, who had so much else to do when they came out at night-time to cast their nets, would stand still to listen to her song.

Travellers came from all parts of the world to the Emperor's city, and they admired the city, the palace, and the garden ; but if they heard the nightingale they all said, "This is the best." And they talked about her after they went home, and learned men who wrote books about the city, the palace, and the garden, praised the nightingale above everything else. Poets also wrote the most beautiful verses about the nightingale of the wood near the sea.

These books went round the world, and one of them at last reached the Emperor. He read and read, and nodded his head every moment ; for these splendid descriptions of the city, the palace, and the garden, pleased him greatly.

But at last he saw something that surprised him. The words "But the nightingale is the best of all" were written in the book.

"What in the world is this?" said the Emperor. "The nightingale! I do not know it at all! Can there be such a bird in my empire, in my garden even, without my having even heard of it? Truly one may learn something from books."

So he called his Prime Minister. Now this was so grand a personage that no one of inferior rank might speak to him; and if one did venture to ask him a question, his only answer was "Pooh!" which has no particular meaning.

"There is said to be a very remarkable bird here, called the nightingale," began the Emperor; "her song, they say, is worth more than anything else in all my dominions. Why has no one ever told me of her?"

"I have never before heard her mentioned," said the Prime Minister; "she has never been presented at court."

"I wish her to come and sing before me this evening," said the Emperor. "The whole world, it seems, knows what I have, better than I do myself!"

"I have never before heard her mentioned," said the Prime Minister, "but I will seek her, and try to find her."

But where was she to be found? The Prime Minister ran up one flight of steps, down another, through halls, and through passages, but not one of all the people he met had ever heard of the nightingale. So he went back to the Emperor, and said, "It must be a fable invented by the man who wrote the book. Your Imperial Majesty must not believe all that is written in books; much in them is pure invention."

"But the book in which I have read it," said the Emperor, "was sent me by the high and mighty Emperor of Japan, and therefore it cannot be untrue. I wish to hear the nightingale; she must be here this evening; and if she do not come, after supper the whole court shall be flogged."

In great alarm, the Prime Minister again ran up stairs and down stairs, through halls and through passages; and half the court ran with him; for no one liked the idea of

being flogged. Many were the questions asked about the wonderful nightingale, of whom the whole world talked, and about whom no one at court knew anything.

At last they met a poor little girl in the kitchen, who said, "Oh yes! the nightingale! I know her very well. Oh! how she can sing! Every evening I carry the fragments left at table to my poor sick mother. She lives by the seashore; and when I am coming back, and stay to rest a little in the wood, I hear the nightingale sing. It makes the tears come into my eyes!"

"Little kitchen-maiden," said the Prime Minister, "I will get you a good place in the kitchen, and you shall have permission to see the Emperor dine, if you will take us to the nightingale; for she is expected at court this evening."

So they went together to the wood where the nightingale was accustomed to sing, and half the court went with them. Whilst they were on the way, a cow began to low.

"Oh!" said the court pages, "now we have her! It is certainly a wonderful voice for so small an animal; surely we have heard it somewhere before."

"No, those are cows you hear lowing," said the little kitchen-maid; "we are still far from the place."

The frogs were now croaking in the pond.

"There she is now!" said the chief court-preacher; "her voice sounds just like little church-bells."

"No, those are frogs," said the little kitchen-maid, "but we shall soon hear her."

Then the nightingale began to sing.

"There she is!" said the little girl; "listen! listen! There she sits," she added, pointing to a little grey bird up in the branches.

"Is it possible?" said the Prime Minister. "I should not have thought it. How simple she looks! She must certainly have changed colour at the sight of so many distinguished personages."

"Little nightingale!" called out the kitchen-maid, "our gracious Emperor wishes you to sing something to him."

"With the greatest pleasure," said the nightingale, and she sang so beautifully that every one was enchanted.



* SHE SANG SO BEAUTIFULLY THAT EVERY ONE WAS ENCHANTED "

"It sounds like glass bells," said the Prime Minister. "And look at her little throat, how it moves! It is singular that we should never have heard her before; she will have great success at court."

"Shall I sing again to the Emperor?" asked the nightingale, for she thought the Emperor was among them.

"Most excellent nightingale!" said the Prime Minister, "I have the honour to invite you to a court festival, which is to take place this evening, when His Imperial Majesty will be delighted to hear you sing."

"My song would sound far better among the green trees," said the nightingale; but she followed willingly when she heard that the Emperor wished it.

In the centre of the grand hall where the Emperor sat, a golden perch had been fixed, on which the nightingale was to sit. The whole court was present, and the little kitchen-maid received permission to stand behind the door, for she now had the rank and title of "Maid of the Kitchen." All were dressed in their finest clothes; and all eyes were fixed upon the little grey bird, to whom the Emperor nodded as a signal for her to begin.

The nightingale sang so sweetly that tears came into the Emperor's eyes and tears rolled down his cheeks. Then the nightingale sang more sweetly still, and touched the hearts of all who heard her; and the Emperor was so pleased that he said, "The nightingale shall have my golden slippers, and wear them round her neck." But the nightingale thanked him, and said she was already sufficiently rewarded.

"I have seen tears in the Emperor's eyes; that is the greatest reward I can have. The tears of an Emperor have a special value. I feel myself highly honoured." And then she sang again more charmingly than ever.

"That singing is the most charming gift ever known," said the ladies present; and they put water into their mouths, and tried when they spoke to move their throats as she did. They thought to become nightingales also. Indeed, even the footmen and chamber-maids declared that they were quite satisfied; which was a great thing to say, for of all people they are the most difficult to please. Yes indeed!

the nightingale's success was complete. She was now to remain at court, to have her own cage, with permission to fly out twice in the day and once in the night. Twelve servants were set apart to wait on her on these occasions, who were each to hold the end of a silken band fastened round her foot. There was not much pleasure in that kind of flying.

All the city was talking of the wonderful bird; and when two people met, one would say only "nightin" and the other "gale"; and then they sighed, and understood each other perfectly. Indeed, eleven of the children of the citizens were named after the nightingale; but not one of them could sing a note.

One day a large parcel arrived for the Emperor, on which was written "The Nightingale."

"Here we have another new book about our far-famed bird," said the Emperor. But it was not a book; it was a little piece of mechanism lying in a box—an artificial nightingale, which was intended to look like the living one, but covered all over with diamonds, rubies, and sapphires. When this artificial bird had been wound up, it could sing one of the tunes that the real nightingale sang; and its tail, all glittering with silver and gold, went up and down all the time.

"That is splendid!" said every one; and he who had brought the bird was given the title of "Chief Imperial Nightingale Bringer."

Then the Emperor ordered that the real and the toy nightingales should sing together. But it did not succeed, for the real nightingale sang in her own natural way, and the artificial bird produced its tones by wheels.

"It is not his fault," said the music master; "he keeps exact time, and quite according to method."

So the artificial bird now sang alone. He was quite as successful as the real nightingale; and then he was so much prettier to look at—his plumage sparkled like jewels.

Three and thirty times he sang one and the same tune, and yet he was not weary. Every one would willingly have

heard him again. The Emperor, however, now wished the real nightingale to sing something—but where was she? No one had noticed that she had flown out of the open window—flown away to her own green wood.

“What is the meaning of this?” said the Emperor; and all the courtiers abused the nightingale, and called her a most ungrateful creature. “We have the best bird at all events,” said they, and for the four and thirtieth time they heard the same tune, but still they did not quite know it, because it was so difficult. The music master praised the bird very highly; indeed, he declared it was superior to the real nightingale in every way.

“For see,” he said, “with the real nightingale one could never reckon on what was coming, but everything is settled with the artificial bird. He will sing in this one way, and no other. This can be proved; he can be taken to pieces, and the works can be shown—where the wheels lie, how they move, and how one follows from another.”

“That is just what I think,” said everybody; and the artist received permission to show the bird to the people on the following Sunday. “They too shall hear him sing,” the Emperor said. So they heard him, and were as well pleased as if they had all been drinking tea; for it is tea that makes the Chinese merry. But the fisherman who had heard the real nightingale, said, “It sounds very pretty, almost like the real bird; but yet there is something wanting, I do not know what.”

The real nightingale was banished from the empire.

The artificial bird had his place on a silken cushion, close to the Emperor's bed; all the presents he received, gold and precious stones lay around him. He had been given the rank and title of “High Imperial Toilet Singer.”

And the music master wrote five and twenty volumes about the artificial bird, with the longest and most difficult words that are to be found in the Chinese language. So, of course, all said they had read and understood them, otherwise they would have been stupid, and perhaps would have been flogged.

Thus it went on for a year. The Emperor, the court, and all the Chinese knew every note of the artificial bird's song by heart; but that was the very reason why they enjoyed it so much—they could now sing with him. The little boys in the street sang "zizizi, cluck, cluck, cluck!" and the Emperor himself sang too.

But one evening, when the bird was in full voice and the Emperor lay in bed and listened, suddenly there was a "whizz" inside the bird. Then a spring cracked. "Whir-r-r" went all the wheels running round; and the music stopped.

The Emperor jumped quickly out of bed, and had his chief physician called; but of what use could he be? Then a clockmaker was fetched; and at last, after a great deal of discussion and consultation, the bird was in some measure put to rights again; but the clockmaker said he must be spared much singing, for the pegs were almost worn out, and it was impossible to put in new ones, at least without spoiling the music.

There was great lamentation, for now the artificial bird was allowed to sing only once a year, and even then there were difficulties. However, the music master made a short speech full of his favourite long words, and said the bird was as good as ever; and, of course, no one contradicted him.

When five years were passed away, a great affliction visited the whole empire, for the Emperor was ill, and it was reported that he could not live. A new Emperor had already been chosen, and the people stood in the street, outside the palace, and asked the Prime Minister how the Emperor was.

"Pooh!" said he, and shook his head.

Cold and pale lay the Emperor in his magnificent bed. All the court believed him to be already dead, and every one ran away to greet the new Emperor.

But the Emperor was not yet dead. He could scarcely breathe, however, and it appeared to him as though something was sitting on his chest. He opened his eyes, and saw that it was Death. He had put on the Emperor's

crown, and in one hand held the golden scimitar and in the other the splendid imperial banner. From under the folds of the thick velvet hangings the strangest-looking heads were peering forth, some with very ugly faces, and others with looks that were extremely gentle and lovely. These were the bad and good deeds of the Emperor, which were now all fixing their eyes upon him, whilst Death sat on his heart.

"Do you know this?" they whispered one after another. "Do you remember that?" And they began reproaching him in such a manner that the sweat broke out upon his forehead.

"I have never known anything like it," said the Emperor. "Music, music, the great Chinese drum!" cried he; "let me not hear what they are saying."

They went on, however; and Death, quite in the Chinese fashion, nodded his head to every word.

"Music, music!" cried the Emperor. "You dear little golden bird! sing, I pray you, sing!—I have given you gold and precious stones, I have even hung my golden slippers round your neck—sing, I pray you, sing!"

But the bird was silent. There was no one there to wind him up; and without that he could not sing. Death continued to stare at the Emperor with his great hollow eyes! And everywhere it was still, fearfully still!

All at once came the sweetest music through the window. It was the little living nightingale who was sitting on a branch outside. She had heard of her Emperor's severe illness, and was come to sing to him of comfort and hope. As she sang, the spectral forms became paler and paler; the blood flowed more and more quickly through the Emperor's feeble members; and even Death listened, and said, "Go on, little nightingale, go on."

"Will you give me the beautiful golden sword? Will you give me the rich banner? and will you give me the Emperor's crown?" said the bird.

And Death gave up all these treasures for a song. And the nightingale sang on. She sang of the quiet churchyard where white roses blossom, where the lilac sends forth its

fragrance, and the fresh grass is bedewed with the tears of the sorrowing friends of the departed. Then Death was seized with a longing to see his garden, and, like a cold white shadow, flew out at the window.

"Thanks, thanks, little bird," said the Emperor. "I know you well. I banished you from my realm, and you have sung away those evil faces from my bed, and death from my heart. How can I reward you?"

"You have already rewarded me," said the nightingale; "I have seen tears in your eyes, as when I sang to you for the first time. Those I shall never forget; they are the jewels that gladden a minstrel's heart! But sleep now, and wake fresh and healthy. I will sing to you again."

And she sang—and the Emperor fell into a sweet sleep. Oh, how soft and refreshing it was!

The sun shone in at the window when he awoke, strong and healthy. Not one of his servants had returned, for they all believed him dead; only the nightingale still sat beside him and sang.

"You shall always stay with me," said the Emperor. "You shall only sing when it pleases you, and the artificial bird I will break into a thousand pieces."

"Do not so," said the nightingale; "he has done what he could; take care of him. I cannot stay in the palace; but let me come when I like. I will sit on the branches close to the window, in the evening, and sing to you, that you may become happy and have thoughts full of joy. I will sing to you of those who rejoice and of those who suffer. I will sing to you of all that is good or bad which is hidden from you. The little minstrel flies afar to the fisherman's hut, to the peasant's cottage, to all who are far distant from you and your court. I love your heart more than your crown, and yet the crown has an odour of something holy about it. I will come; I will sing. But you must promise me one thing."

"Everything," said the Emperor. And now he stood in his imperial splendour, which he had put on himself, and held to his heart the scimitar so heavy with gold.

"One thing I beg of you: let no one know that you have a little bird who tells you everything; then all will go on well." And the nightingale flew away.

The attendants came in to look at their dead Emperor—and the Emperor said, "Good-morning!"

THE TOP AND THE BALL

A TOP and a ball were lying together in a box, among other playthings, and the top said to the ball: "Why should we not become bride and bridegroom, since we are thrown so much together?"

But the ball, who was made of morocco, and thought herself a very fine young lady, would not even condescend to answer.

The next day, the little boy to whom the playthings belonged came and painted the top red and yellow, and drove a brass nail into the middle of it, and then the top looked almost grand when he was spinning round. "Look at me now!" said he to the ball; "what do you say? Why should not we become man and wife? We suit each other so well. You can jump and I can spin; it would not be easy to find a couple happier than we should be."

"Indeed!" said the ball. "Perhaps you do not know that my father and mother were morocco slippers, and that I have a Spanish cork in my body."

"Yes, but I am made of mahogany," said the top. "The Mayor made me with his own hands; for he has a lathe of his own, and took great pleasure in turning me."

"Can I be sure of that?" said the ball.

"May I never be whipped again if I lie," said the top.

"You can plead your cause very well," said the ball; "but I am not at liberty to accept your proposal. I am as good as engaged to a young swallow. Whenever I fly up in the air, he puts his head out of his nest and says: 'Will you?' I have said 'Yes' to him in my heart, and that is almost the same as being engaged. But I promise I will never forget you!"

"Much good that will be to me!" said the top; and they ceased speaking to each other.

Next day the ball was taken out. The top saw her fly up like a bird into the air, till she went quite out of sight. She came back, but every time she touched the ground she sprang higher than before. Either love, or the cork she had in her body, must have been the cause of this.

The ninth time she did not return, and though the boy sought and sought, he could not find her; she was gone.

"I know well where she is," sighed the top; "she is in the swallow's nest, and has married the swallow." The more the top thought of her, the more beautiful did the ball appear. That she could not be his only made his love the stronger. That she had liked another better than him was very sad. He could not forget that! And he span and hummed, but was always thinking of the dear ball, who in his memory grew more and more lovely. Thus years passed, and his was now an old love. He himself was no longer young! One day, however, he was gilded all over; never before had he looked so handsome. He was now a gilt top, and span most bravely, humming all the time. Yes, that was famous! But one day he sprang too high, and he, too, was gone! They sought and sought, even in the cellar; but he was nowhere to be found.

Where could he be? He had jumped into a barrel full of all sorts of rubbish—cabbage-stalks, sweepings, dust, and rain droppings that had fallen down from the gutter.

"Well, this is a nice place," said he. "My gay gilding will soon be spoiled here; and what sort of trumpery can I have fallen in with?" And he peeped at a long cabbage-stalk which lay fearfully near him, and at a strange round thing somewhat like an apple. But it was not an apple; it was an old ball that had lain for years in the gutter, and was quite soaked through.

"Thank goodness! At last I see an equal, with whom I may speak," said the ball, looking fixedly at the gilt top. "I am made of real morocco, sewed together by a young lady's hands, and I have Spanish cork in my body; though to see me now, no one would think so. I was on the point

of marriage with the swallow when I fell into the gutter. There I lay for five years, and at last was washed down into this place. I am now wet through. Only think what a wearisome time it is for a young lady to be in such a situation!" But the top answered not a word. He thought of his long-lost love, and the more he heard the more certain he became that it was she. The servant-maid now came, and was going to turn the barrel over. "Hurrah!" exclaimed she, "there is the gilt top."

And the top was brought back to the play-room. It was used and admired as before; but nothing more was heard of the ball, nor did the top ever even speak of his old love; for that feeling passed quickly away. How could it be otherwise, when he found that she had lain five years in the gutter, and that she was so much altered that he scarcely knew her again!

Who ever thinks highly of any one he meets in such a position?

LITTLE IDA'S FLOWERS

"My flowers are quite faded," said little Ida. "Only yesterday evening they were so pretty, and now they are all drooping! What can be the reason of it?" asked she of the student who was sitting on the sofa. He was a great favourite with her, because he used to tell her stories, and cut out all sorts of pretty things for her in paper: hearts, and little ladies dancing in them; flowers; high castles with doors that could open. He was a charming student.

"Do you not know?" he asked. "Your flowers went to a ball last night, and are tired; that is why they all hang their heads."

"Surely flowers cannot dance!" cried little Ida.

"Of course they can dance!" said the student. "When it is dark, and we are all gone to bed, they jump about as merrily as possible. They have a ball almost every night."

"May children go to the ball too?" asked Ida.

"Yes," said the student; "daisies and lilies of the valley."

"And where do the pretty flowers dance?" asked the child.

"Have you never been in the large garden in front of the King's beautiful summer palace, the garden so full of flowers?" said the student.

"I was there yesterday with my mother," said Ida, "but there were no leaves on the trees, neither did I see a single flower. What could have become of them? There were so many in the summer-time!"

"They are now in the palace," answered the student. "As soon as the King leaves his summer abode, and returns with all his court to the town, the flowers also hasten out

of the garden and into the palace, where they enjoy themselves very much. Oh! if you could but see them! The two loveliest roses sit on the throne, and act King and Queen. The red cockscombs then arrange themselves in rows before them, bowing very low. These are the gentlemen of the bedchamber. After that the prettiest among the flowers come in, and open the ball. The blue violets are for little naval cadets, and they begin dancing with the hyacinths and crocuses, who take the part of young ladies. The tulips and the tall orange-lilies are old dowagers, whose business it is to see that everything goes on with perfect propriety."

"But," asked little Ida, "may the flowers when they choose give their ball in the King's palace?"

"No one knows anything about it," replied the student. "Perhaps once during the night the old chamberlain may come in, with his great bunch of keys, to see that all is right; but as soon as the flowers hear the clanking of the keys they are quite still, and hide themselves behind the long silk window curtains. 'I smell flowers here,' says the old chamberlain, but he is not able to find them."

"That is very funny," said Ida, clapping her little hands; "but could not I see the flowers?"

"To be sure you could!" answered the student. "You have only to peep in at the window next time you go to the palace. I did so to-day, and saw a long yellow lily lying on the sofa. That was a court lady."

"Can the flowers in the Botanic Garden go there too?" asked Ida. "Can they go so far?"

"Certainly, for flowers can fly if they wish," replied he. "The pretty red and yellow butterflies, that look so much like flowers, are in fact nothing else. They jump from their stalks, move their petals as if they were little wings, and fly about. As a reward for always behaving themselves well, they are allowed, instead of sitting quietly on their stalks, to flutter hither and thither all day long, till wings actually grow out of their petals. It may be that the flowers in the Botanic Garden have not heard what merry-making goes on every night at the palace;

but I assure you, if, next time you go into the garden, you whisper to one of the flowers that a ball is to be given at night at the castle, the news will be repeated from flower to flower, and thither they will all fly. Then, should the professor come into the garden and find all his flowers gone, he will wonder what is become of them."

"Indeed!" said Ida. "But how can the flowers repeat to each other what I say to them? I am sure flowers cannot speak."

"No, they cannot speak, you are right there," answered the student; "but they make themselves understood by signs. Have you never seen them move to and fro at the least breath of air? In that they can understand each other as well as we can by talking."

"And does the professor understand their signs?" asked Ida.

"Certainly!" said the student. "One morning he came into the garden, and saw a tall nettle was making signs to a pretty red carnation. 'You are so beautiful,' it was saying, 'and I love you so much!' But the professor could not allow such things, so clapped his hands on the nettle's leaves, which, as you know, are its fingers, and the leaves stung him sharply, and since then he has never dared to touch a nettle."

"Ha, ha!" laughed little Ida, "that was funny."

"What do you mean," said a tiresome lawyer, who had come on a visit and was sitting on the sofa, "by putting such things into children's heads?" He could not bear the student, and always used to scold when he saw him cutting out funny figures—as, for instance, a man on the gallows holding a heart in his hand, meant for a heart-stealer; or an old witch riding on a broomstick and carrying her husband on the tip of her nose. The lawyer did not like these jokes, and used to say as he had just said, "How can any one put such nonsense into a child's head? What silly fancies they are!"

But little Ida thought what the student had told her about the flowers was very wonderful, and she could not leave off thinking of it. She was now sure that her

flowers hung their heads because they were tired with dancing so much the night before. So she took them to the pretty little table in her room where her playthings lay. Her doll lay sleeping in the cradle, but Ida said to her, "You must get up; Sophy, and be content to sleep to-night in the table-drawer, for the poor flowers are ill, and must sleep in your bed; perhaps they will be well again by to-morrow." She then took out the doll, who said not a word but looked vexed and cross at having to give up her cradle to the flowers.

Ida then laid the flowers in the doll's bed, drew the quilt over them, and told them to lie quite still whilst she made some tea for them, so that they might be quite well again the next day. And she drew the curtains round the bed, so that the sun might not dazzle their eyes.

All the evening she thought of nothing but the student's words; and just before she went to bed she ran up to the window, where her mother's tulips and hyacinths stood behind the blinds, and whispered to them, "I know very well that you are going to a ball to-night." But the flowers moved not a leaf, and seemed not to have heard her.

After she was in bed she thought for a long time how delightful it must be to see the flowers dancing in the King's palace; and she said to herself, "I wonder whether my flowers have been there?" And while she was wondering she fell asleep. During the night she awoke. She had been dreaming of the student and the flowers, and of the lawyer who told her that the student was making game of her. All was still in the room, the night-lamp was burning on the table, and her father and mother were both asleep.

"I wonder whether my flowers are still in Sophy's bed?" said she. "I should very much like to know." She raised herself a little, and looking towards the door, which stood half open, she saw that the flowers and all her playthings were just as she had left them. She listened, and it seemed to her as if some one must be playing on the piano; but the tones were lower and sweeter than any she had ever heard before.

"Now my flowers must certainly be dancing in there,"

she thought. "Oh, how I should like to see them!" But she dared not get up for fear of waking her father and mother. "If they would only come in here!" But the flowers did not come, and the piano sounded so sweetly. At last she could bear it no longer. She must see the dancing. So she crept lightly out of bed, and stole towards the door of the room. Oh, what wonderful things she saw then!

No night-lamp was burning; but it was quite light in the room, for the moon shone through the window, upon the floor. All the hyacinths and tulips stood there in two rows, whilst their empty pots might still be seen in front of the windows. The flowers were dancing gracefully holding each other by their long green leaves as they turned round. At the piano sat a large yellow lily, which Ida felt sure she must have seen before, for she remembered the student saying that this flower was very much like Miss Laura, one of Ida's friends; and how every one had laughed. Now she herself saw that the lily was very like her friend, for it had exactly her way of playing, bowing its long yellow face now to one side, now to the other, and nodding its head to mark the time. A tall blue crocus now stepped forward, sprang upon the table on which lay Ida's playthings, went straight up to the bed, and drew back the curtains. There lay the sick flowers; but they got up at once and greeted the other flowers, who invited them to dance with them. The sick flowers looked quite well again, and danced as merrily, as the rest.

Suddenly a noise, as of something falling from the table, was heard. Ida cast a glance that way, and saw that it was the rod which she had found on her bed on the morning of Shrove Tuesday, and which seemed desirous of taking its place among the flowers. It was certainly a very pretty rod, and a little wax doll was fixed on the top of it, wearing a hat as broad-brimmed as the lawyer's, with a blue and red ribbon tied round it. The rod hopped about in the middle of the flowers, and stamped the floor merrily. It was dancing the Mazurka, which the flowers could not dance because they were so light-footed.

All at once the wax doll on the rod swelled out to a giant, tall and broad, and exclaimed in a loud voice, "How can any one put such nonsense into a child's head? What silly fancies they are!" And now the doll looked as much like the lawyer in his broad-brimmed hat as one drop of water looks like another. Its face looked as yellow and peevish as his. The paper flowers on the rod, however, pinched its thin legs, whereupon it shrunk up and was again a little wax doll. Little Ida thought this scene so droll that she could not help laughing. The company, however, did not notice it, for the rod continued to stamp about, and the doll-lawyer was obliged to dance too, whether he would or no, and make himself now thin, now thick, now tall, now short, till at last the flowers interceded for him, and the rod then left him in peace.

A loud knocking was now heard from the drawer in which lay Ida's doll. It was Sophy who made the noise. She put her head out of the drawer and asked in great astonishment, "Is there a ball here? Why has no one told me of it?"

"Will you dance with me?" asked the nut-crackers.

"Certainly you are a very fit person to dance with me!" said Sophy, turning her back to him. She then sat down on the table, expecting that one of the flowers would come and ask her to dance, but no one came. She coughed—"Hem! hem!"—still no one came. Meantime the nut-crackers danced by himself.

As no flowers came forward to ask Sophy to dance, all at once she let herself fall down on the floor, which made a great noise, and all the flowers ran up to ask her whether she had hurt herself. Fortunately she was not at all hurt. The flowers were now all very polite, especially Ida's flowers, who thanked her for the nice bed in which they had slept. Then they led her into the middle of the room where the moon shone and danced with her, whilst all the other flowers stood in a circle round them. Sophy was now quite happy, and begged Ida's flowers to make use of her bed again after the ball, as she did not at all mind sleeping one night in the table-drawer.

But the flowers said, "We owe you many thanks for your kindness, but we shall not live long enough to need it; we shall be quite dead by to-morrow. Still, please ask little Ida to bury us in the garden near her canary-bird; then next summer we shall wake again and be even more beautiful than we have been this year."

"No, you must not die!" replied Sophy, as she kissed the flowers.

Just then the door was suddenly opened, and a number of flowers danced in. Ida could not understand where these flowers came from, unless from the King's Garden. First came two lovely roses wearing golden crowns. These were the King and Queen. Then followed stocks and pinks, bowing to all who were present. They had also a band with them. Great poppies and peonies blew upon the shells of peas till they were quite red in the face, whilst blue and white campanulas rang a merry peal on their bells. Then came a great many other flowers: violets, daisies, lilies of the valley, narcissuses, and others, who all moved so gracefully that it was delightful to see them.

At last, these happy flowers wished one another "Good-night"; and little Ida crept into bed to dream of all the beautiful things she had seen.

Next morning, as soon as she was dressed, she went to her little table to see if her flowers were there. She drew aside the bed-curtains—yes! there lay the flowers, but they were to-day much more faded than yesterday. Sophy too was lying in the drawer, but she looked very sleepy.

"Do you remember what the flowers told you to say to me?" asked little Ida. But Sophy looked stupid, and did not say a word.

"You are not at all good!" said Ida, "and yet all the flowers let you dance with them." She then chose out from her playthings a little pasteboard box with birds painted on it, and in it she placed the faded flowers. "That shall be your coffin," said she, "and when my cousins come to see me, they shall go with me to bury you in the garden, in order that next summer you may bloom again, and be still more beautiful than you have been this year."

The two cousins of whom she spoke were two lively boys, called James and Adolphus. Their father had given them two new cross-bows, which they brought with them to show to Ida. She then told them of the poor flowers that were dead, and were to be buried in the garden. The two boys walked in front with their bows slung across their shoulders, and little Ida followed carrying the dead flowers in their pretty coffin. A grave was dug for them in the garden. Ida kissed the flowers once more, then laid the box down in the hollow, and James and Adolphus shot arrows over the grave with their cross-bows, for they had neither guns nor cannon.

THE SANDMAN

THERE is no one in the whole world who knows so many stories as the Sandman, or who can tell them so well.

In the evening, when children are sitting quietly at table, or on their little stools, he takes off his shoes, comes softly upstairs, opens the door very gently, and throws sand in their eyes; just enough to hinder the children from keeping them open and seeing him. He then glides behind them, and breathes lightly, very lightly, upon their necks, and thereupon their heads become very heavy. But it does them no harm, for the Sandman means it kindly. He only wants the children to be quiet, and they are never quiet but when they are in bed and asleep. They must be quiet, that he may tell them his stories.

When the children are asleep, the Sandman sits down upon the bed. He is gaily dressed; his coat is of silk, but of what colour it is impossible to say, for it seems now green, now red, now blue, according to the light. Under each arm he carries an umbrella. One, which has pictures painted on it, he holds over good children, and then they have the most delightful dreams all night long; and the other, which has nothing on it, he holds over naughty children, so that they sleep heavily, and awake in the morning without having dreamed at all.

Now let us hear what stories the Sandman told to a little boy named Hjalmar, to whom he came every evening for a whole week.

MONDAY

"Listen to me," said the Sandman, as soon as he had got Hjalmar into bed, "and I will decorate your room."

While he was speaking, the flowers in the flower-pots grew up into large trees, whose long branches stretched to the ceiling and spread along the walls, so that the room looked like a beautiful arbour. All the branches were laden with flowers, every flower more beautiful even than the rose, and more fragrant. Moreover, could you have tasted them you would have found them sweeter than sugar. Fruit, which shone like gold, hung from the trees, and dumplings full of currants. Never was the like seen before. But, at the same time, a loud wailing was heard in the table-drawer, where Hjalmar's school-books were kept.

"What is the matter?" said the Sandman, going up to the table, and taking out the drawer. There lay the slate, on which the figures were pressing and squeezing together, because a wrong figure had got into the sum, so that it was near falling to pieces. The pencil hopped and skipped about like a little dog; he wanted to help the sum, but he could not. And a little farther off lay Hjalmar's copy-book. At the beginning of every line on each page stood a large letter with a little letter by its side; this was the copy. And after them stood other letters intended to look like the copy. Hjalmar had written these; but they seemed to have fallen over the lines, upon which they ought to have stood.

"Look, this is the way you must hold yourselves," said the copy; "look, slanting just so, and turning round with a jerk."

"Oh! we would do so willingly," said Hjalmar's letters; "but we cannot, we are so badly made!"

"Then you shall have some of the children's physic," said the Sandman.

"Oh no!" cried they, and stood so straight that it was a pleasure to see them.

"Well, I cannot tell you any more stories now," said the Sandman; "I must drill these letters: right, left, right, left!" So he drilled the letters till they looked as straight and perfect as only the letters in a copy can be. However, when Hjalmar looked at them the next morning, they were as miserable and badly formed as before.

TUESDAY

As soon as Hjalmar was in bed, the Sandman touched with his magic wand all the pieces of furniture in the room. Thereupon they all began to chatter, and each piece talked only about itself, excepting the spittoon, who stood quite still, and was much vexed at their being so vain, all chattering about themselves, without ever thinking of him, who stood so modestly in the corner and suffered himself to be spat upon.

Over the chest of drawers hung a large picture in a gilt frame. The picture was a landscape showing tall old trees, flowers blossoming in the grass, and a river that wound its way through the wood and past many a grand old castle till it reached the sea.

The Sandman touched the picture with his magic wand; and immediately the birds began to sing, the branches waved to and fro, and the clouds sailed by, casting their shadows over the fields below.

The Sandman then lifted little Hjalmar up to the frame, and put his feet into the picture. There he stood amid the tall grass. He ran to the water's edge, and sat down in a little boat that was painted red and white and had sails glittering like silver. Six swans, with golden wreaths round their necks and bright blue stars upon their heads, drew the boat along close to a green wood, where the trees were telling stories about robbers and witches, and the flowers were talking of the pretty little fairies, and of what the butterflies had said to them.

Lovely fishes, with scales like gold and silver, swam behind the boat, every now and then leaping up so that the water was splashed over Hjalmar's head; birds red and blue, great and small, flew after him in two long rows; the gnats danced, and the cockchafers sang "Boom, boom." They all wished to go with Hjalmar, and every one of them had a story to tell.

A pleasant voyage that was. The woods were now close and dark; now like beautiful gardens beaming with flowers and sunshine. Large palaces built of glass and marble rose

from among the trees; and on the balconies stood young princesses. These were all little girls whom Hjalmar knew well, and with whom he had often played. They stretched out their hands to him, each holding a pretty little heart made of sugar, such as is seen in confectioners' shops. Hjalmar seized the end of one of these little hearts as he sailed by, and a princess kept hold of the other, so each got half—the princess the smaller, Hjalmar the larger. At every castle gate a little prince was keeping guard. Each shouldered a golden scimitar, and showered down raisins and tin soldiers. You could see at once that these were true princes. Hjalmar sailed sometimes through woods, sometimes through lofty halls, or through busy towns. He sailed through the town where the nurse lived who had cared for him when he was a baby, and who loved him so much. She nodded and beckoned to him as he passed by, and sang the song she herself had written and sent to him—

Beloved Hjalmar, my baby dear,
My constant thoughts on thee attend :
On cheeks, and mouth, and eyes so clear
I shower my kisses without end.

With joy your first lisped word I heard,
And now to thee Adieu must say.
May God my nursling angel guard
In every hour ; I fondly pray.

And all the birds sang with her, the flowers danced upon their stalks, and the old trees nodded their heads whilst the Sandman told stories to them also.

WEDNESDAY

How the rain was pouring down ! Hjalmar could hear it even in his sleep, and when the Sandman opened the window the water came up to the window-sill. There was quite a lake in front of the house, and on it a lovely ship.

"Will you sail with me, little Hjalmar?" said the Sandman. "If you will, you shall visit foreign lands to-night, and be here again by the morning."



"A PLEASANT VOYAGE THAT WAS"

And now Hialmar, dressed in his Sunday clothes, was in the ship. The weather cleared up at once, and they floated down the street, round the church, and were soon sailing upon the wide rolling sea. They quickly lost sight of land, and could see only a flight of storks, who had left their own country and were going to a warmer one. The storks were flying one after another, and had already been flying a long time. One of them was so weary that his wings could scarcely bear him up any longer. He was the last of the row, and was soon far behind the others. He sank lower and lower, with his wings outspread. He still tried to move them, but it was all in vain. His wings touched the ship's cordage, he slid down the sail, and—crash! there he stood on the deck.

So the cabin-boy caught him and put him where the hens, and ducks, and turkeys were kept. The poor stork stood amongst them quite dazed.

"Only look, what a foolish fellow!" said all the hens. And the turkey-cock made himself as big as he could, and asked him who he was; and the ducks waddled backwards and cried "Quack, quack!"

The stork then told them about warm Africa, about the pyramids, and about the ostrich, who races across the desert like a wild horse; but the ducks did not understand him, and quacked to each other, "Isn't he very stupid?"

"Yes, indeed he is stupid!" said the turkey-cock, and began to gobble.

So the stork was silent, and thought of Africa. "You have really very pretty slender legs!" said the turkey-cock. "What did they cost you a yard?"

"Quack, quack, quack," all the ducks began to titter; but the stork seemed not to have heard the question.

"You might just as well have laughed with them," said the turkey-cock to him. "It was a capital joke! But perhaps it was too deep for you? Ah! ah! isn't he clever? Let us have some fun while he is here." And then he gobbled, the hens cackled, and the ducks quacked. What a dreadful noise they made with their fun!

But Hialmar went to the hen-house, opened the door, and

called the stork, who at once jumped on deck. He had now rested himself and he looked happy, and nodded his head to Hialmar, as if to thank him. He then spread his wings and flew away—whilst the hens cackled, the ducks quacked, and the turkey-cock turned red as fire.

“To-morrow, we will have you all made into soup!” said Hialmar; whereupon he awoke, and found himself in his own little bed. A strange journey had the Sandman taken him that night!

THURSDAY

“I’ll tell you what!” said the Sandman, “do not be afraid, and you shall see a little mouse!” Then he held out his hand, with the pretty little animal in it. “She is come to invite you to a wedding; there are two little mice here, who intend this very night to be married. They live under the floor of the dining-room, so theirs must be a pretty house.”

“But how can I get through the little hole?” asked Hialmar.

“Let me take care of that,” said the Sandman. “I will make you very little!” and he touched Hialmar with his magic wand, and he became smaller and smaller, till at last he was no larger than his own fingers. “Now, you can borrow the tin soldier’s clothes; I think they will just fit you; and it looks so grand to wear uniform when you are in company.”

“Ah yes!” said Hialmar, and in another moment he was dressed like the prettiest little tin soldier.

“Will you be so good as to sit down in your mother’s thimble?” said the little mouse, “and I shall have the pleasure of drawing you to the wedding.”

“Will your ladyship really take so much trouble?” said Hialmar. And away they went to the mouse’s wedding.

They first came to a long passage under the floor, just high enough for the thimble to be drawn along through it. It was lighted throughout with toadstools.

“Is there not a pleasant smell here?” said the mouse who was drawing the thimble. “The passage has been smeared with rind of bacon. There is nothing more delightful!”

They now entered the bridal hall. The lady mice stood on the right hand, whispering together, seemingly very merry; on the left side stood the gentlemen mice stroking their whiskers with their paws. In the middle of the room, in the scooped-out rind of a cheese, the bride and bridegroom were standing kissing each other before the eyes of all present. The whole room, like the passage, was smeared with the rind of bacon. This was all the entertainment given. For dessert, however, a pea was brought out, in which a little mouse belonging to the family had bitten the initials of the married couple. Was not this a splendid idea!

All the mice said that it had been a very nice wedding, and that they had had a very happy evening.

When it was all over, Hialmar returned home. He had certainly been in most distinguished company; but still, he felt as though he had rather lowered himself by becoming so small and wearing the uniform of a tin soldier.

FRIDAY

"What are we to do to-night?" asked Hialmar.

"Why, I do not know whether you would like to go to another wedding?" said the Sandman. "The one of which I am now speaking is quite different from yesterday's. Your sister's big doll, that looks like a man and is called Herman, is going to marry the doll Bertha. It is also Bertha's birthday; so they will doubtless receive a great many presents."

"Oh yes! I know that already," said Hialmar. "Whenever the dolls want new clothes, my sister calls it either their birthday or their wedding-day. They must certainly have been married a hundred times already."

"Yes, but to-night they will be married for the hundred and first time; and when that is over they can never be married again. So this time the wedding will be a very grand affair indeed. Only look!"

Hialmar looked at the table, where stood the little doll's house. The windows were lighted up, and tin soldiers pre-

sented arms at the door. The bride and bridegroom were sitting on the floor leaning against the leg of the table. The Sandman put on Hialmar's grandmother's black gown and married them. When the ceremony was over, all the furniture in the room began singing a pretty song which had been written by the lead-pencil and went to the tune of the drummer's tattoo :—

Our joyous chorus cast to the blast ;
Now all forms are past, they are fast.
Hurrah ! for bridal pair, both so fair ;
Both made of leather rare, past compare ;
And though both deaf and blind, never mind ;
Ring forth our greetings kind, on the wind.

And now presents were brought to them. All eatables, however, they declined ; love was enough for them to live upon.

"Shall we go to the country, or make a tour in some foreign land ?" asked the bridegroom. So the swallow, who had travelled a good deal, and the old hen, who had hatched five broods of chickens, were consulted. And the swallow spoke of those beautiful, warm countries where bunches of grapes, large and heavy, hang on the vines ; where the air is so balmy, and the mountains of various hues, such as are never known here.

"But then they have not our green cabbages !" said the hen. "One summer, I and all my chickens lived in the country. There was a gravel-pit, in which we might go and scrape about, and we had access to a garden that was full of green cabbages. Oh, how green they were ! I cannot imagine anything more beautiful !"

"But one cabbage looks exactly like another," said the swallow ; "and then we so often have wet weather here."

"One gets accustomed to that," said the hen.

"But it is so cold, it freezes."

"That is good for the cabbages," said the hen. "But it can be warm sometimes. Did we not, four years ago, have a summer which lasted five weeks ? It was so hot that one could hardly breathe. Then, too, in this country, we have

no poisonous animals and we are free from robbers. He is a blockhead who does not think our country the most beautiful of all! he does not deserve to live here!" At these words, tears rolled down the hen's cheeks. "I too have travelled; I have been twelve miles in a coop. There is no pleasure at all in travelling."

"Yes, the hen is a sensible animal!" said the doll Bertha. "I do not wish to travel over the mountains. It is only going up to come down again. No, we will go to the gravel-pit, and walk in the garden among the cabbages."

And so it was settled.

SATURDAY

"Now may I have some stories?" asked little Hjalmar as soon as the Sandman had put him to sleep.

"We shall have no time for them this evening," said the Sandman, spreading his picture umbrella over him. "Look at these Chinese!" The umbrella resembled a large Chinese plate, with blue trees and pointed bridges on which little Chinese men and women stood nodding their heads.

"By to-morrow morning all the world must be made fine," said the Sandman; "it is a festival day, it is Sunday. I must go to the church-tower, to see whether the little spirits of the church are rubbing the bells so as to make them sound sweetly. I must away to the fields, to see that the winds are sweeping the dust off the grass and leaves. I must take down the stars, also, to brighten them. I put them into my apron; but first they must be numbered, and the holes in which they sit, up in the sky, must be numbered also, so that every one may return to his proper place; else they would not sit firmly, and we should have too many falling stars."

"Listen to me, Mr. Sandman," said an old portrait which hung on the wall, near the bed. "Do you know that I am Hjalmar's great-grandfather? I am much obliged to you for telling the boy stories; but you must not puzzle him. Stars cannot be taken down and brightened; they are bodies like our earth."

"Many thanks, old great-grandfather!" said the Sandman, "many thanks! You are certainly very old, but I am older still. I know how to behave myself to high and low. Now you may tell the stories yourself." So the Sandman walked off, taking his umbrella with him.

"Well, I never!" said the portrait. "Dare one not even express an opinion nowadays?" Then Hialmar awoke.

SUNDAY

"Good evening!" said the Sandman; and Hialmar nodded his head to him, and jumped up to turn his great-grandfather's portrait to the wall, in order that it might not interrupt him as it did yesterday.

"Now you shall tell me stories about the five green peas that all lived in one pod, and about the chickseed courting the chickweed, and about the darning-needle that wished to be fashionable and fancied herself a fine needle."

"One may have too much of a good thing," said the Sandman. "I would rather show you something else; I will show you my brother. He never comes more than once to any one; and whomsoever he visits, he takes on his horse, and tells him a story. He knows only two stories; the one more delightful than any one in the world can imagine; the other so dreadful, it cannot be described." And the Sandman lifted little Hialmar up to the window, saying, "There is my brother, the other Sandman. He is also called Death! You see he is not so frightful as he is shown in picture-books, where he seems to be all bones. No, he wears clothes embroidered with silver; a mantle of black velvet flies over his horse, behind him. See how he gallops!"

And Hialmar saw the other Sandman ride on, and take old and young with him on his horse. Some he placed in front, and others behind; but he always asked first what sort of mark-book they had to show.

"Good," they all replied. "Yes, but let me see it," said he. So they were obliged to show it to him; and all

those who had "Very Good" written in it were put in front of the horse, and heard the story that was so delightful. But those who had "Pretty Good" or "Bad" in their mark-book were made to get up behind, and listen to the dreadful story. They trembled and wept; they tried to jump down from the horse's back, but that they could not, for they were as firmly fixed on it as if they had grown there.

"Death is a most beautiful Sandman," said Hjalmar. "I am not afraid of him."

"That you should not be," said the Sandman, "only take care to have a good mark-book to show."

"This is very instructive," muttered the grandfather's portrait. "It's always good to give one's opinion."

These are the stories of the Sandman; perhaps, he may tell you more this very evening.

THUMBYKIN

ONCE upon a time there was a woman who wished very much for a little child, but did not know where to find one. So at last she went to a witch and said to her: "I do so much wish to have a little child; can you, who are so wise, tell me where I can find one?"

"I can readily do so," said the witch. "There is nothing easier. Here is a barley corn, but it is quite unlike those that grow in the farmers' fields and that the fowls eat. Put it into a flower-pot and wait and see what takes place."

"Oh, thank you so much," said the woman, giving the witch twelve shillings, which was the price she asked for her barley corn. Thereafter she went straight home and planted the barley corn, and at once a large handsome flower sprang up. It looked something like a tulip, but its leaves were as tightly closed as if they were the leaves of a bud. "What a lovely flower!" said the woman, kissing its red and golden coloured leaves. At her kiss the leaves burst open with a crack and she saw that it was really a tulip such as one can see almost anywhere. But lo! in the very centre of the blossom, on one of the green velvet stamens, sat a tiny maiden, a delicate and graceful little creature, scarcely half as long as a thumb; and when the woman saw her she called her Thumbykin, because she was so small.

A finely polished walnut shell formed her cradle, and therein, on a bed of violets, under a rose-leaf coverlet, Thumbykin slept soundly at night. During the day she amused herself by floating across a plate full of water in a large tulip-leaf which served her for a boat. The woman had placed the plate of water on a table, and put a wreath of flowers round the edge of it, and from side to side of

daughter-in-law. When she had finished her work she swam out with her ugly son to the leaf where she had placed poor Thumbykin. She wished to carry off the pretty bed, that she might put it in the bridal chamber to be ready for the bride. To the little maiden the old toad in the water bowed low and said, "Here is my son. He is to be your husband, and you will have a very happy life together in the fine house I have prepared for you down in the marsh by the stream."

"Croak, croak, croak," was all the ugly son could say for himself.

So the old toad and her son took up the pretty little cradle and swam away with it, leaving Thumbykin sitting weeping all alone on the green lily-leaf. She could not bear to think of living all alone with the old toad, and of having her ugly son for a husband.

Now the little fishes, who had been swimming about in the water, and had seen the old toad and had heard every word she said, leaped up till their heads were above the water, so that they might see the little girl; and when they caught sight of her they saw that she was very pretty, and they felt very sorry that any one so pretty should have to go and live with the ugly toads.

"No, no!" said they. "Such a thing must never be allowed."

So all the little fishes gathered together in the water round the green stalk of the leaf on which the little maiden stood, and they bit the stalk with their teeth until at last they bit it through. Then away went the leaf sailing quickly down the stream, and carrying Thumbykin far away where the toad could never reach her.

Past many towns she sailed, and when the birds in the bushes saw her they sang, "What a lovely little girl!" On floated the leaf, carrying her farther and farther away, until at last she came to another land. Round her head a pretty little white butterfly kept constantly fluttering, till at last it settled on the leaf. He was greatly pleased with Thumbykin, and she was glad of it, for it was not possible now that the ugly toad could ever reach her, and the land

through which she was sailing was very beautiful, and the sun shone on the water till it glowed and sparkled like silver. So Thumbykin took off her sash and tied one end of it round the butterfly, and fixed the other end to the leaf, which now sped on much faster than before, having the butterfly for a sail, and took the little maiden with it.

Presently a great cockchafer flew past. The moment he caught sight of the maiden he seized her, putting his claws round her slim waist, and away he flew with her into a tree. But the green leaf floated on down the river, and the butterfly flew with it; for he was tied to the leaf, and could not get away.

Oh, how frightened Thumbykin was when the cockchafer flew away with her into the tree! She was sorry, too, for the pretty white butterfly which she had tied to the leaf; for, if he could not free himself, he would certainly die of hunger. But the cockchafer did not worry himself about that. He sat down beside her on one of the leaves of the tree, and gave her some honey from a flower to eat, and told her that she was very pretty, though not at all like a cockchafer. In a little all the cockchafers that lived in the tree came to visit her. They stared their hardest at Thumbykin, and one young lady cockchafer said, "Why, she has only two legs! How ugly that looks!" "She has no feelers," said another; "how stupid she must be!" "How slender her waist is!" said a third. "Pooh! she looks just like a human being."

"How ugly she is!" said all the lady cockchafers. Thumbykin was really very lovely, and the cockchafer who had carried her off thought so; but when they all said she was ugly, he began to think that it must be true. So he would have nothing more to say to Thumbykin, but told her that she might go where she pleased. Then the cockchafers flew down with her from the tree, and placed her on a daisy, and Thumbykin wept because she thought she was so ugly that the cockchafers would have nothing to say to her. And all the time she was in reality one of the loveliest creatures in the world, and as tender and delicate as a rose-leaf.

All the summer through poor Thumbykin lived all alone in the forest. She wove for herself a little bed with blades of grass, and she hung it up under a clover-leaf so that she might be sheltered from the rain. For food she sucked the honey from the flowers, and from the leaves every morning she drank the dew. So the summer and the autumn passed away, and then came the long cold winter. The birds that had sung to her so sweetly had all flown away; the trees had lost their leaves, and the flowers were withered. The great clover-leaf under whose shelter she had lived was now rolled together and shrivelled up, and nothing of it was left but a yellow withered stalk.

Poor Thumbykin felt very, very cold, for her clothes were torn, and she was such a frail, delicate little thing that she nearly died. The snow, too, began to fall, and each flake, as it fell on her, was like a whole shovelful falling on one of us; for we are tall, and she was only about an inch high. Then she rolled herself up in a dry leaf; but it cracked in the middle, and there was no warmth in it, so she shivered with cold. Very near the wood in which she had been living there was a large corn-field, but the corn had been cut long before this, and there was nothing left but the hard, dry stubble standing up out of the frozen ground. To Thumbykin, going through it, it was like struggling through another forest; and, oh, how bitterly cold it was! At last she came to the door of the house of a field-mouse, who lived in a hole under the stubble. It was a warm, cosy house, and the mouse was very happy, for she had a whole roomful of corn, besides a kitchen and a fine dining-room. Poor little Thumbykin stood before the door of the house, just like a beggar girl, and prayed the mouse for a small bit of barley corn, because she was starving, having had nothing to eat for the last two days.

"Poor little thing!" said the field-mouse, who was really a kind-hearted old creature, "come into my warm room and have dinner with me." The mouse was greatly pleased with Thumbykin, so she said, "If you like, you can spend the winter with me: of course you will keep my rooms

tidy and tell me stories. I am very fond of hearing stories."

Thumbykin did all the kind old mouse asked her; and in return she was well treated and very comfortable. "We shall have a visitor soon," said the field-mouse to Thumbykin one day; "my neighbour pays me a visit once a week. He is much richer than I am; he has fine large rooms and wears a beautiful black velvet fur. If you could get him for a husband you would indeed be well off. He is blind though, poor man! so you must tell him some of your prettiest stories." But Thumbykin knew that the neighbour spoken of was only a mole, and she did not mean to trouble herself about him.

The mole, however, came and paid his visit. He was dressed in his black velvet coat.

"He is very learned and very rich," whispered the old field-mouse to Thumbykin, "and his house is twenty times larger than mine."

Rich no doubt he was, and learned too; but never having seen the sun or the beautiful flowers, he always spoke slightly regarding them. Thumbykin found that she had to sing to him; so she sang, "Lady-bird, lady-bird, fly away home," and "As I was going along, long, long," and other pretty songs, and the mole at once fell deeply in love with her because she had such a sweet voice; but, being a prudent man, he said nothing about his feelings.

A short time before this visit, the mole had dug a long underground passage between the two houses, and he gave the field-mouse and Thumbykin permission to walk in this passage whenever they pleased. But he told them that there was a dead bird lying in the passage, and he begged them not to be frightened by it. "The bird," he said, "was perfect, with beak and feathers all complete. It could not have been dead long, and had been buried just where he had made the passage." Then the mole took a piece of rotten wood in his mouth, and it shone like fire in the darkness, and he went before them to light them through the long dark passage. When they came to where the dead

bird lay the mole pushed his broad nose through the ceiling so as to make a hole.

The daylight fell through the hole and shone on the body of the dead swallow. Its pretty wings were closely folded, and its head and claws were hidden under its feathers. The poor bird had undoubtedly died of cold. It made the little girl very sad to see it, for she dearly loved the little birds. All the summer through they had chirped and sung to please her.

But the unfeeling mole thrust the swallow aside with his crooked legs, and said, "He will sing no more now. What a wretched thing it must be to be born a bird. Thank Heaven, none of my children will ever be birds. Birds can do nothing but cry Tweet, tweet! and they always starve to death in the winter."

"Indeed, as a sensible man, you may well say so," cried the field-mouse. "What does his chirping and twittering do for a bird when the winter comes? Can his tweet, tweet, appease his hunger, or keep him from being frozen to death? And yet it is thought to be very well bred!" Thumbykin did not speak; but when the other two turned their backs on the dead bird, she stooped down and smoothed aside the feathers that covered the head, and kissed the closed eyelids."

"Perhaps it was you who sang so sweetly to me in the summer," she said; "and how much pleasure you gave me, you dear pretty bird!"

The mole then stopped up the hole through which the daylight came, and walked home with the ladies. But at night Thumbykin could not sleep; so she got out of bed, and wove a fine large rug of soft hay. When she had finished it, she gathered together some soft flower down that she found in the field-mouse's sitting-room; and she carried the rug and the down to the dead bird. The down was soft and warm like wool, and she put it carefully round him and spread the coverlet over him, that he might lie warm in the cold earth.

"Good-bye! you dear, pretty little bird," said she; "good-bye. Thank you for all the sweet songs you sang in

the summer when the trees were green and the sun shone down warmly upon us." Saying this she laid her head on the breast of the bird, but almost at once she raised it in surprise. It seemed as if something inside the bird was going "thump, thump." It was the swallow's heart. The swallow had not been really dead but only numbed with the cold, and when the warmth again stole over him his life came back.

In Autumn all the swallows fly away into warmer lands, and if one happens to linger too long, the cold strikes it, and it becomes frozen and falls down as if it were dead, and it lies where it falls and the cold snow covers it.

Thumbykin trembled with fear, for the bird seemed very large in comparison with a little thing like herself, only an inch long. But her pity was stronger than her fear, and being a brave little girl, she covered the poor swallow more thickly with the down, and ran and brought a balsam leaf that she herself had used as a coverlet and spread it over the bird's head.

Next night she again stole into the passage to see him. He was still alive, but he was very weak, and could only open his eyes to look for a moment at his kind little nurse, who stood over him, holding in her hand a rotten piece of wood, for she had no other light.

"Thank you, pretty little maiden," whispered the sick swallow; "I am so nice and warm now that I shall soon get back my strength, and be able to fly about again in the warm sunshine."

"Alas!" said she. "You must wait for some time. It is too cold out of doors just now, it snows and freezes. You must stay in your warm bed, and I will take care of you."

Then she brought him some water in a flower-leaf; and when he had drunk it he told her how he had wounded one of his wings in a thorn-bush and was not able to fly as fast as the other swallows; how they flew away without him; and how he fell senseless to the ground. He could not remember any more, and did not know how he came to be where he then lay. All the winter the swallow remained

underground, and Thumbykin nursed him with the tenderest care. She did not say a word about the sick swallow to the mole or to the field-mouse, for they did not like birds. Soon the spring came, and the sun warmed the earth, and the swallow said good-bye to his kind little nurse. She opened the hole in the ceiling which the mole had made, and the glorious sunshine poured into the passage, and the swallow begged her to go away with him. "She could sit on his back," he said; "and he would fly away with her into the green woods." But the little maiden knew that it would vex the old field-mouse if she left her in that way, so she said, "No, I cannot come."

"Good-bye then, good-bye, you pretty little darling," said the swallow; and away he flew into the sunshine. Thumbykin gazed after him and tears filled her eyes. She dearly loved the pretty swallow, whose life she had saved.

"Joy, joy!" sang the bird as he flew away into the green woods. But poor Thumbykin was very sorrowful. She was not able to get out into the warm sunshine; for the corn which the farmer had sown in the field over the house of the field-mouse had grown up so high that it seemed a lofty and pathless wood to the little maiden who was only an inch high.

"Now," said the field-mouse to her one day, "you are going to be married, Thumbykin. My neighbour, the mole, has proposed for you. What a piece of luck for a poor girl like you! You must begin at once to get your wedding clothes ready. You must have both woollen and linen, for nothing must be wanting in the wedding outfit of a mole's bride."

Thumbykin had to set to work with the spindle, and the field-mouse hired four spiders who had to weave day and night. Every evening the mole came to pay his visit, and he always spoke of the time when the summer would be over. Then he said they would be married. Just now the sun was so hot that it burned up the ground and made it as hard as a stone. But the little maiden was not at all happy. She thought the mole tiresome and did not like him. In the morning when the sun rose, and in the evening

when he set, she used to creep out at the door, and when the wind blew aside the ears of corn so that she could catch a glimpse of the blue sky, she used to think how lovely it was in the light, and long to see her dear swallow once more. But he never came back again, for by this time he had flown far, far away into the green woods. When the autumn came, Thumbykin had her wedding outfit quite ready; and the field-mouse said to her, "Well, Thumbykin, in a month now you shall be married." But the girl cried, and said she would never marry the tiresome mole.

"Nonsense, nonsense!" said the mouse. "Don't be foolish or I shall bite you with my white teeth. The mole will make you a very handsome husband. The Queen herself does not wear such a handsome black velvet coat. He has, besides, a full kitchen and cellar. You ought to be very thankful for your good fortune."

At length the wedding-day arrived. The mole came to fetch his bride. Thumbykin would have to go away and live with him deep under the earth, and never again see the warm sun because he did not like it. The poor little maid was very sad at the thought of saying farewell to the beautiful sun: and as the field-mouse had permitted her to stand at the door, she went out to look at it once more, and to say farewell to it.

"Farewell, dear bright sun!" she cried, stretching out her arms towards it. Then she walked a little away from the house, for the corn had been cut, and there was only the dry stubble left in the fields. "Farewell, farewell!" she said again, throwing her arms round a little red flower that grew close beside her. "Give my love to the swallow, if you should ever see him again."

Suddenly a "Tweet, tweet" sounded over her head. She looked up, and there was the swallow himself flying past. As soon as he spied Thumbykin he flew to her with delight, and she told him her story, told him how unwilling she was to marry the stupid mole, and to live always under the earth, and never again see the bright sun. As she told him about her marriage she could not help weeping.

"The cold winter is coming now," said the swallow, "and I am going to fly away to a warmer land. Will you come with me? You can sit on my back. Tie yourself on with your girdle. Then we will fly far away from the ugly mole and his gloomy abode; fly far away over the hills to warmer lands—lands where the sunshine is brighter than it is here, where there are lovely flowers, and where it is always summer. Fly away with me now, dear little Thumbykin. You saved my life when I lay frozen in yonder black tunnel."

"Yes, I will come with you," said the little maiden. Then she sat down on the bird's back with her feet resting on his outspread wings; and she fastened her girdle to one of his stronger feathers. And the swallow rose high into the air, and flew fast over forest and lake, and over the snow-capped mountains. Poor Thumbykin would have been frozen, but she crept under the bird's warm feathers, peeping out from time to time so that she might catch a glimpse of the beautiful lands over which they were passing. At last they reached the warm countries, where the sun shines much more brightly than it does here, and where the sky seems twice as high above the earth. There by the wayside and on the hedges there grew purple and green and white grapes, and pale lemons and golden oranges hung from the trees in the woods. The air was fragrant with the scent of myrtle and balm, and along the country lanes ran beautiful children, playing with large gay butterflies. The farther the swallow flew the more beautiful every place seemed to grow. At last they came to a lovely blue lake, and by the side of it, shaded by stately green trees, stood a pure white marble castle. It was an old building, and the vine leaves twined round its lofty columns. At the top of these there were many swallows' nests, and one of these was the nest of the swallow who carried Thumbykin.

"This is my house," said the swallow; "but it would not do for you to live here. Will you choose for yourself one of those beautiful flowers?—and I will put you down on it, and then you shall have everything you can wish to make you happy."

"That will be charming," cried the little maiden; and she clapped her tiny hands.

On the ground lay a large white marble pillar, which had fallen and been broken into three pieces. Between the pieces grew the most beautiful large white flowers. The swallow flew down with Thumbykin and set her on one of the broad leaves. But how surprised she was to see in the middle of the flower, a tiny little man as white and transparent as glass! On his head was a graceful golden crown, and at his shoulders a pair of delicate wings. He was not much larger than the little maid herself. He was the flower-elf. An elf-man and an elf-maid live in every flower, and this was the King of all the flower-elves.

"Oh, how beautiful he is!" whispered Thumbykin to the swallow.

The little flower-king was at first quite frightened at the bird. Compared to such a little thing as himself, it was a giant. But when he saw Thumbykin he was charmed. Never had he seen such a pretty girl. He took the gold crown from his head and placed it on hers; he asked her name, and begged her to marry him, and become as she should the Queen of all the flowers.

This was certainly a very different kind of husband to the son of the toad or to the mole with his black velvet coat; so she said "yes" to this handsome prince, her new suitor. Then all the flowers opened, and out of each came a tiny lady and gentleman. They were all so graceful that it was a pleasure to look at them. They each brought Thumbykin a present; but the present she loved most of all was a pair of lovely white wings from a big white fly. When these were fastened to her shoulders she could fly from flower to flower.

Then there were great rejoicings, and the little swallow who sat in his nest overhead was asked to sing for them a wedding song. He sang as well as he could; but his heart was sad, for he was very fond of the little maiden, and had hoped never again to part from her.

"You must no longer be called Thumbykin," said the

flower-elf to her. "It's an ugly name, and you are very beautiful. We will call you Maia."

"Good-bye, good-bye," sang the swallow, sad at heart, as he left the warm lands and flew away to the colder North. There he had a nest outside the window of a man who could tell fairy tales. For him the swallow sang "Tweet, tweet," *and that's how we came to hear the whole story.*

THE DAISY

IN the country, close by the roadside, there stood a manor-house. In front was a little garden full of flowers, surrounded by a painted fence; and on a bank outside the fence there grew, amidst the freshest of grass, a little daisy. The sun shone as brightly and warmly upon the daisy as upon the splendid flowers within the garden, and therefore it grew and grew, till one morning it stood fully open.

She did not fret because she was only a little flower and no one could see her for the grass; she was quite contented. She turned toward the warm sun, looked up to the blue sky, and listened to the lark singing in the air. It did not vex her that she could not do the same. "I can see and listen," thought she; "the sun shines on me, and the wind kisses me. Oh, how richly I am blessed!"

There stood within the palings several grand, stiff-looking flowers; the less scent they had, the more airs they gave themselves. The peonies puffed themselves out to make themselves larger than the roses. The tulips had the gayest colours of all; they were perfectly aware of it, and held themselves bolt upright that they might be the better seen. They took no notice at all of the little flower outside the fence; but she looked at them all the more, thinking, "How rich and beautiful they are! Yes, that pretty bird will surely fly down and visit them. How happy am I, who live so near them and see their beauty!" Just at that moment the lark did fly down, but he came not to the peonies or the tulips; no, he flew down to the poor little daisy in the grass, who trembled from joy, and knew not what to think, she was so surprised.

The little bird hopped about and sang, "Oh, how soft is this grass! and what a sweet little flower blooms here, with

its golden heart and silver dress!" For the yellow centre of the daisy looked just like gold, and the little petals around gleamed silver white.

How happy the little daisy was no one can ever tell! The bird kissed her with his beak, sang to her, and then flew up again into the warm blue sky. It was a full quarter of an hour before the daisy recovered herself. Half shyly, and yet half in delight, she looked at the flowers in the garden; they must certainly be aware of the honour and happiness that had befallen her, they must know how delighted she was. But the tulips held themselves twice as stiffly as before, and their faces grew quite red with anger. As to the peonies, they were thick-headed and slow, but it was well they could not speak, or the little daisy would have heard something not very pleasant. The poor little flower could see well that they were in an ill-humour, and it made her sad.

Just then, a girl came into the garden with a sharp, bright knife. She went up to the tulips and cut off one after another. "Oh, that is dreadful!" sighed the daisy; "it is all over with them now." Then the girl carried away the tulips.

How glad was the daisy that she grew in the grass outside the palings, and was only a poor little flower! When the sun set, she folded her leaves, went to sleep, and dreamed all night of the sun and the beautiful bird.

The next morning, when our little flower, fresh and cheerful, again spread out all her white leaves to the bright sunshine and clear blue air, she heard the voice of the bird; but he sang mournfully. Alas! the poor lark had good reason for sorrow; he had been caught, and put into a cage close by the open window. He sang of the joys of his free flight, of the young green corn in the fields, and of the pleasure of being borne up by his wings higher and higher. The poor bird was certainly very unhappy; he sat a prisoner in his narrow cage!

The little daisy wished very much to help him; but how could she? And because she could not, she quite forgot how beautiful all around her was, how warmly the sun

shone, and how pretty her own white petals were. Alas! she could only think of the imprisoned bird.

Just then two little boys came out of the garden. One of them had a knife in his hand, as large and as sharp as that with which the girl had cut the tulips. They went up straight to the little daisy, who could not think what they wanted.

"Here we can cut a nice piece of turf for the lark," said one of the boys; and he began to cut deep all round the daisy, leaving her in the centre.

"Tear out the flower," said the other boy. The little daisy trembled all over for fear; for she knew that if she were torn out she would die, and she wished so much to live, as she was to be put into the cage with the lark.

"No, leave it alone," said the first; "it looks so pretty!" So the daisy was left, and was put into the lark's cage.

But the poor bird loudly mourned the loss of its freedom, and beat its wings against the iron bars of its cage; and the little flower could not say a single word of comfort to him, much as she wished to do so. Thus passed the whole morning.

"There is no water here!" said the lark. "They have all gone away and forgotten me. Not a drop of water to drink! My throat is hot and dry; I feel as if I had fire and ice within me, and the air is so heavy! Alas! I must die, I must leave the warm sunshine and the fresh green fields and all the beautiful things God has made." Then he thrust his beak into the cool grass to refresh himself, and his eye fell on the daisy, and he bowed to her, and said, "You too will wither here, you poor little flower! They have given me you, and the little bit of turf around you, for the whole world outside which I had before! Every little blade of grass is to be to me a tree, and your every white petal a fragrant flower! Alas! you only make me think of what I have lost."

"Oh! that I could comfort him!" thought the daisy.

She could not speak; but the scent from her leaves was sweeter than it had ever been before, and the lark noticed it, and though he was fainting with thirst, and in his pain

pulled up the blades of grass, he would not touch the daisy.

It was evening, and yet no one came to bring the poor bird a drop of water; he stretched out his pretty wings and fluttered them convulsively; his song died away in a mournful "Tweet, tweet"; his little head sank beneath the flower, and his heart broke from thirst and grief. The flower could not now, as last night, fold her leaves and sleep; she bent down, sad and sick, to the ground.

The boys did not come till next morning; and when they saw the bird was dead they wept bitterly. They put the bird's dead body into a pretty red box and buried it, and then they strewed the grave with flowers. Like a prince was the poor bird buried! Whilst he lived and sang they forgot him, and left him to die of want in his cage; and now that he was dead his grave was strewn with flowers, and tears were shed over him.

But the turf with the daisy was thrown out into the dusty road. No one thought of the daisy who had felt most for the little bird, and who had so much wished to comfort him.

THE BUCKWHEAT

IF after a storm you go through a field in which buckwheat is growing, you will see that it has become quite black, as if it had been burned. I will tell you the why and wherefore as I heard it from the sparrow, who heard it from the lips of an old willow-tree that dwelt near a field of corn and buckwheat, and is there still. The corn was glad to be alive, and grateful too, for the fuller his ears were the lowlier he bent as if in humble thankfulness. The proud buckwheat, however, held his head high and erect.

"I have as many golden ears as the corn," he said, "and am far prettier. My flowers are as lovely as apple blossom. Have you ever seen anything more lovely than I am, old willow-tree?"

The willow-tree only nodded, as much as to say, "That I have."

"The stupid tree!" said the buckwheat. "He is so old that the grass is growing out of his body!"

Just then a great storm arose. All the flowers of the field folded their petals, and bent down their little heads. The buckwheat alone stood erect and proud.

"Bend your head as we do," said the flowers.

"I will not bow," said the buckwheat.

"Close your flowers and fold in your leaves," said the old willow-tree. "Do not look up at the lightning, for you will see right into heaven itself. Even men are blinded if they look; what then would happen to us, who are but weeds of the ground, if we dared to do so?"

"Weeds of the ground!" said the buckwheat scornfully; "I will look up into heaven itself." The buckwheat in his pride looked upward. For a moment the whole world seemed to be in flames.

When the storm had passed over, how sweet everything was after the rain! The flowers breathed again, and the corn waved in the wind. But the buckwheat lay on the ground all withered and charred. The old willow-tree shook his head in the wind, and big drops fell from his leaves. It was as if he wept. The sparrows chirped: "Why do you weep? Do you not breathe the fragrance of flowers and leaves? Why do you weep, old willow-tree?" Then the willow-tree told them what had happened to the proud buckwheat, and I who tell you now heard it all from the sparrows one evening when I asked them for a story.

THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES

MANY years ago there was an Emperor who was so very fond of new clothes that he spent all his money on dress. He did not trouble himself in the least about his soldiers; nor did he care to go either to the theatre or to hunt, except for the occasion they gave him for showing off his new clothes. He had a different suit for each hour of the day; and as of any other king or emperor one is accustomed to say, "He is sitting in council," it was always said of him, "The Emperor is sitting in his wardrobe."

Time passed merrily in the large town that was his capital. Strangers arrived at the court every day. One day two rogues, calling themselves weavers, made their appearance. They gave out that they knew how to weave stuffs of the most beautiful colours and patterns, but that the clothes made from these had the wonderful property of remaining invisible to every one who was either stupid or unfit for the office he held.

"Those would indeed be splendid clothes!" thought the Emperor. "Had I such a suit, I might at once find out what men in my realms are unfit for their office, and be able to distinguish the wise from the foolish. This stuff must be woven for me immediately." And he caused large sums of money to be given to the weavers, that they might begin their work at once.

So the rogues set up two looms, and made a show of working very busily, though in reality they had nothing at all on the looms. They asked for the finest silk and the purest gold thread; put both into their own knapsacks; and then continued their pretended work at the empty looms until late at night.

"I should like to know how the weavers are getting on

with my cloth," thought the Emperor after some time. He was, however, rather nervous when he remembered that a stupid person, or one unfit for his office, would be unable to see the stuff. "To be sure," he thought, "I have nothing to risk in my own person; but yet I would prefer sending somebody else to bring me news about the weavers and their work, before I trouble myself in the affair." All the city had heard of the wonderful property the cloth was to possess, and all were anxious to learn how worthless and stupid their neighbours were.

"I will send my faithful old minister to the weavers," concluded the Emperor at last. "He will be best able to see how the cloth looks; for he is a man of sense, and no one can be better fitted for his post than he is."

So the faithful old minister went into the hall where the knaves were working with all their might at their empty looms. "What can be the meaning of this?" thought the old man, opening his eyes very wide. "I can't see the least bit of thread on the looms!" However, he did not speak aloud.

The rogues begged him most respectfully to be so good as to come nearer; and then asked whether the design pleased him, and whether the colours were not very beautiful, pointing at the same time to the empty frames. The poor old minister looked and looked; he could see nothing on the looms, for there was nothing there. "What!" thought he, "is it possible that I am silly? I have never thought so myself; and no one must know it now. Can it be that I am unfit for my office? It will never do for me to say that I could not see the stuff."

"Well, Sir Minister!" said one of the knaves, still pretending to work, "you do not say whether the stuff pleases you."

"Oh, it's very fine!" said the old minister, looking at the loom through his spectacles. "The pattern, and the colours are wonderful. Yes, I will tell the Emperor without delay how very beautiful I think them."

"We are glad they please you," said the cheats; and then they named the different colours and described the pattern

of the pretended stuff. The old minister paid close attention, that he might repeat to the Emperor what they said. Then the knaves asked for more silk and gold, saying it was needed to complete what they had begun. Of course, they put all that was given them into their knapsacks, and kept on as before working busily at their empty looms.

The Emperor now sent another officer of his court to see how the men were getting on, and to find out whether the cloth would soon be ready. It was just the same with him as with the first. He looked and looked, but could see nothing at all but the empty looms.

"Isn't it fine stuff?" asked the rogues. The minister said he thought it beautiful. Then they began as before, pointing out its beauties and talking of patterns and colours that were not there.

"I certainly am not stupid," thought the officer. "It must be that I am not fit for my post. That seems absurd. However, no one shall know it." So he praised the stuff he could not see, and said he was delighted with both colours and patterns. "Indeed, your Majesty," said he to the Emperor when he gave his report, "the cloth is magnificent."

The whole city was talking of the splendid cloth that the Emperor was having woven at his own cost.

And now the Emperor thought he would like to see the cloth while it was still on the loom. Accompanied by a select number of officials, among whom were the two honest men who had already admired the cloth, he went to the cunning weavers who, when aware of the Emperor's approach, went on working more busily than ever, although they did not pass a single thread through the looms.

"Is it not absolutely magnificent?" said the two officers who had been there before. "If your Majesty will only be pleased to look at it! what a splendid design! what glorious colours!" And at the same time they pointed to the empty looms; for they thought that every one else could see the cloth.

"How is this?" said the Emperor to himself; "I can see nothing! Oh, this is dreadful! Am I a fool? Am I unfit to be an Emperor? That would be the worst thing

that could happen to me.—Oh! the cloth is charming," said he aloud. "It has my complete approval." And he smiled most graciously, and looked closely at the empty looms; for on no account would he say that he could not see what two of the officers of his court had praised so much. All the retinue now looked and looked, but they could see nothing any more than the others. Nevertheless, they all exclaimed, "Oh, how beautiful!" and advised His Majesty to have some new clothes made from this splendid material for the approaching procession. "Magnificent! charming! excellent!" resounded on all sides; and every one seemed greatly pleased. The Emperor showed his satisfaction by making the rogues knights, and giving them the title of "Gentlemen Weavers to the Emperor."

The two rogues sat up the whole of the night before the day of the procession. They had sixteen candles burning, so that every one might see how hard they were working to finish the Emperor's new suit. They pretended to roll the cloth off the looms; they cut the air with great scissors, and sewed with needles without any thread in them. "See!" cried they at last; "the Emperor's new clothes are ready!"

And now the Emperor, with all the grandees of his court, came to the weavers. The rogues raised their arms, as if holding something up, and said, "Here are your Majesty's trousers! here is the scarf! here is the mantle! The whole suit is as light as a cobweb. You might fancy you had on nothing at all when dressed in it; that, however, is the great virtue of this fine cloth."

"Yes, indeed!" said all the courtiers, although not one of them could see anything; because there was nothing to be seen.

"If your Imperial Majesty will be graciously pleased to take off your clothes, we will fit on the new suit in front of the large looking-glass," said the swindlers.

The Emperor accordingly took off his clothes, and the rogues pretended to put on him separately each article of his new suit, the Emperor turning round from side to side before the looking-glass.



"THE EMPEROR WALKED UNDER HIS HIGH CANOPY"

"How splendid His Majesty looks in his new clothes! and how well they fit!" every one cried out. "What a design! what colours! These are indeed royal robes!"

"The attendants are waiting outside with the canopy which is to be borne over your Majesty in the procession," announced the chief master of the ceremonies.

"I am quite ready," answered the Emperor. "Do my new clothes fit well?" he asked, turning himself round again before the looking-glass as if he were carefully examining his handsome suit.

The lords of the bedchamber, who were to carry His Majesty's train, felt about on the ground, as if they were lifting up the ends of the mantle, and walked as if they were holding up a train; for they feared to show that they saw nothing and so be thought stupid or unfit for their office.

So in the midst of the procession the Emperor walked under his high canopy through the streets of his capital. And all the people standing by, and those at the windows, cried out, "Oh! how beautiful are our Emperor's new clothes! what a train there is to the mantle! and how gracefully the scarf hangs!" In short, no one would allow that he could not see those much-admired clothes; because, in doing so, he would have declared himself either a fool or unfit for his office. Certainly, none of the Emperor's previous suits had made such an impression as this.

"But the Emperor has nothing on at all!" said a little child.

"Listen to the voice of innocence!" exclaimed her father; and what the child had said was whispered from one to another.

"But he has on nothing at all!" at last cried out all the people. The Emperor was vexed, for he felt that the people were right; but he thought the procession must go on now. And the lords of the bedchamber took greater pains than ever to appear holding up a train, although, in reality, there was no train to hold.

THE REAL PRINCESS

THERE was once a Prince who wished to marry a Princess; but then she must be a real Princess. He travelled all over the world in hopes of finding such a one; but there was always something wrong. Princesses he found in plenty; but he could not make up his mind that they were real Princesses, for now one thing, now another, seemed to him not quite right about them. At last he went back to his palace quite downcast, because he wished so much to have a real Princess for his wife, and he had not been able to find one.

One evening a fearful tempest arose. It thundered and lightened, and the rain came down in torrents. Besides, it was as dark as pitch. All at once there was a violent knocking at the door, and the old King, the Prince's father, went out himself to open it.

It was a Princess who was standing outside. What with the rain and the wind, she was in a sad state; the water trickled from her hair, and her clothes clung to her body. She said she was a real Princess.

"Ah, we shall soon see about that!" thought the old Queen-mother. She gave no hint whatever of what she was going to do, but went quietly into the bedroom, took all the bed-clothes off the bed, and put three little peas on the bedstead. Then she laid twenty mattresses one upon another over the three peas, and put twenty feather-beds over the mattresses.

Upon this bed the Princess was to pass the night.

The next morning she was asked how she had slept. "Oh, very badly indeed!" she replied. "I have scarcely closed my eyes the whole night through. I do not know what was in my bed, but I had something hard under

me, and am all over black and blue. It has hurt me so much!"

Now it was plain that this must be a real Princess, since she had been able to feel the three little peas through the twenty mattresses and twenty feather-beds. None but a real Princess could have had such a delicate sense of feeling.

So the Prince made her his wife, being now convinced that he had found a real Princess. The three peas were, however, put into the royal museum, where they are still to be seen, if they have not been stolen.

Notice that this is a true story.

THE GARDEN OF PARADISE

THERE was once a young Prince who had so many and such beautiful books, that he could find in them anything he wished to know except where the Garden of Paradise was to be found, and this was just what he wished most to know.

When he was a very little boy, just beginning to go to school, his grandmother told him that every flower in the Garden of Paradise tasted like the sweetest of cakes, and that the stamens were full of the choicest wines. On one flower there grew history, on another geography, on a third tables; so that whoever ate the flower immediately knew his lesson; the more he ate, the more he learned of history, geography, or arithmetic.

At that time the young Prince believed it all; but when he grew bigger and wiser, and learned more, he saw plainly that the beauty of the Garden of Paradise must be something quite different. "Oh, why did Eve pluck the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil? and why did Adam eat of the forbidden fruit?" he kept thinking. "Had I been there it would not have happened, and so there would have been no sin in the world." Until he was seventeen years old, he kept constantly thinking about the Garden of Paradise.

One day he went into the wood; he went alone; for to wander thus was his chief delight.

The evening drew on, the clouds gathered, and the rain poured down as if the sky were nothing but a vast water-spout. It was as dark as it is at midnight in the deepest of wells. The Prince now slipped on the wet grass, now stumbled over the bare rocks that projected from the stony ground. Everything was dripping with water, and the poor Prince had not a dry thread on him. His strength was

failing, when he heard a strange rushing noise, and saw before him a large lighted cavern. In the middle of the cave a huge fire was burning, and a fine stag was being roasted before it. A woman, elderly but tall and strong, as if she were a man in disguise, sat by the fire, throwing upon it one piece of wood after another. "Come in," she said to the Prince; "sit down by the fire and dry your clothes."

"There is a great draught here," said the Prince, as he sat down on the ground.

"It will be still worse when my sons come home," answered the woman. "You are now in the Cavern of the Winds; my sons are the Four Winds. Do you understand?"

"Where are your sons?" asked the Prince.

"There is no use in answering stupid questions," said the woman. "My sons have plenty of work on hand; they are playing at ball with the clouds up there in the King's hall!" and she pointed upwards.

"Indeed!" said the Prince. "You speak more harshly, and are not so gentle as the women I am used to."

"Yes, they have nothing else to do! I must be harsh if I am to keep my boys in order; and I can do it, though they are very headstrong. Do you see those four sacks hanging by the wall? They are as much afraid of them as you used to be of the switch behind the looking-glass. I bend them together, and then they must get into the sacks. They know they must obey, I can tell you. There they sit, and dare not try to come out till it pleases me. But here comes one of them!"

It was the North Wind. He brought icy coldness with him; large hailstones rattled on the floor, and flakes of snow flew all round him. He wore a jacket and trousers of bear's skin, a cap of seal's skin was drawn down over his ears; long icicles hung from his beard, and one hailstone after another fell from under the collar of his jacket.

"Don't go too near the fire," said the Prince; "you may get your face and hands frost-bitten."

"Frost-bitten!" laughed the North Wind. "Frost is my greatest delight! But what spindle-shanked boy are you, and how did you get into the Cavern of the Winds?"

"He is my guest," said the old woman; "and if you are not content with that explanation, you may go into the sack! Now, you know."

This was quite enough. The North Wind began to tell whence he came, and how he had spent the last month.

"I come from the Polar Seas," said he. "I have been on the Bear's Island, along with the Russian whalers. I sat and slept at the helm of their ship when they sailed from the North Cape. Whenever I woke up I found the stormy petrels flying about my feet. They are strange birds. They give one flap with their wings and then hold them stretched out straight and fly away."

"Don't make such a story of it," said his mother. "Come to the point; what sort of place is Bear's Island?"

"That is a glorious place!" said the North Wind. "The ground seems made for dancing on, it is as smooth and flat as a plate. Half-melted snow partly covered with moss, sharp stones, and the skeletons of whales, and polar bears are strewn over it, looking like the arms and legs of giants, covered with musty green. You would fancy the sun had never shone there. I blew gently to clear away the clouds, and there I saw a little shed, built from the wood of a wreck, and covered with walrus skins with the fleshy side out. A living polar bear sat growling on the roof. I walked on the shore, peeped into the birds' nests, looked at the poor naked young ones, who were crying with their beaks wide open; I blew into their little throats, and they learned to be quiet. Farther on the walruses with their swine-like heads, and teeth an ell long, rolled like gigantic worms beneath the waters.

"And now the fishery began; the harpoon was thrust into the breast of the sea-horse, and the blood spirted up like a fountain and streamed over the ice. Then I thought of my part of the sport. I began to blow, and set my ships, the icebergs, sailing to crush the boats. Oh! how the sailors screamed and shouted; but I screamed still louder. They were forced to unload their cargo, and to throw the dead walruses, and their chests, and the ship's cordage, out upon the ice. I shook snow-flakes over them, and left them in

their crushed boats to drift southwards, to taste sea-water. They will never come again to Bear's Island!"

"Then you have done mischief!" said the mother of the Winds.

"What good I have done, others may tell," said he. "But here comes my brother of the West. I love him the best of all; he smells of the sea, and has a right healthy coldness about him."

"Can that be little Zephyr?" asked the Prince.

"Yes, it is Zephyr," said the old woman; "but little he is no longer. In days of yore he was a pretty boy; but those times have long passed away."

He came in looking like a wild man, but he had on a sort of padded hat, that his head might not be hurt. In his hand he held a club of mahogany cut in the American forests, no trifling thing to carry.

"Whence come you?" asked the mother.

"From those forest wastes," said he, "where the thorny brambles weave hedges between the trees, where the water snake sleeps in the damp grass, and men seem to be unknown."

"What did you there?"

"I looked at the deep river, marked how it hurled itself from the rocks, and flew like dust towards the clouds, that it might give birth to the rainbow. I saw a buffalo swimming in the river; but the strong stream carried him down. A flock of wild geese were swimming there too. They flew up into the air when they neared the waterfall, leaving the buffalo to be hurled over it. That pleased me, so I raised such a storm as uprooted old trees and brought them to the ground with a crash, broken to splinters, or sent them careering down the stream."

"And have you done nothing else?" said the old woman.

"I have rushed wildly across the Savannas; I have stroked wild horses, and shaken the cocoa-nut trees. Yes, yes, I have many stories to tell! But we need not tell all we know. That you know well, don't you, old lady?" And he kissed his mother so roughly that she almost fell. He was a wild fellow.

Now came the South Wind in his turban and floating Bedouin mantle.

"It is very cold here," said he, as he threw wood upon the fire. "It is easy to see that the North Wind has arrived before me."

"Why, it's hot enough to roast a bear," said the North Wind.

"You're a bear yourself," said the South Wind.

"Do you wish, both of you, to go into the sack?" asked the old woman. "Sit down on that stone there and tell me where you have been."

"In Africa, mother," answered he. "I have been hunting lions in the land of the Kaffirs. Such beautiful grass grows on those plains, green as olives! There the ostrich ran races with me, but I was yet swifter than he. I came to the yellow sands of the desert. There one might fancy oneself at the bottom of the sea. I met with a caravan; they had just killed their last camel, in hopes of getting water to drink, but they did not find much. The sun was burning over their heads, the sands roasting beneath their feet. There seemed no end to the desert. I rolled myself up in the fine loose sand, and threw it up into the form of an immense pillar; a famous dance it had! You should have seen how frightened the dromedaries looked, and how the merchants drew their caftans over their heads. They threw themselves down before me as they are wont to do before Allah. There they are all buried. A pyramid of sand stands over them. If I should one day blow it away, the sun will bleach their bones; and travellers will see that people have been there before them; otherwise, in such a desert, they might think it impossible."

"Then you have only done evil!" said the mother. "March into the sack!" And before he was aware of it, the South Wind was seized and popped into the sack, which rolled about on the floor until the mother sat down on it to keep it still.

"These boys of yours are desperately wild," said the Prince.

"Yes, indeed," answered she; "but I know how to make them obey. Here is the fourth."

Then in came the East Wind, dressed like a Chinaman.

"Oh! you come from that quarter, do you!" said the mother. "I thought you had been to the Garden of Paradise."

"I shall go there to-morrow," said the East Wind. "I have not been there for a hundred years. I now come from China, where I danced round the porcelain tower, till all the bells began to ring. In the street below there was an official flogging going on, and bamboos were being broken on the shoulders of people, from the first to the ninth rank, who cried out, 'Thanks, thanks, my fatherly benefactor!' But the words came not from their hearts; so I rang the bells till they sounded, 'Ding, ding, dong!'"

"You are a wild boy," said the mother. "It is well that you go to-morrow to the Garden of Paradise. Your visits there always improve you. Remember to drink deeply there from the fountain of wisdom, and bring me home a flaskful."

"I will do so," said the East Wind. "But why have you put brother South into the sack? Let him come out. I want him to tell me all about the bird called the phoenix. The Princess, when I visit her once in a hundred years, always asks me about that bird. Open the sack, mother! and I will give you two cupfuls of tea, as fresh and green as when I plucked it."

"Well, then, for the sake of the tea, and because you are my darling, I will open the sack." She did so, and the South Wind crept out; but he looked quite ashamed because the stranger Prince had seen his disgrace.

"Here is a palm leaf for the Princess," said the South Wind; "it was given to me by the old phoenix, the only one in the world. He has scrawled on it, with his beak, his whole history during the hundred years of his life. The Princess can read for herself how the phoenix set fire to his own nest; and sat therein and was burned like a Hindoo widow. How the dry branches crackled! How the smoke and steam rose from the burning nest! At last everything was consumed by the flames, the old phoenix was in ashes; but his egg lay glowing in the fire, it burst with a loud

noise, and the young one flew out. He is now king over all the birds, and the only phoenix in the world. He has bitten a hole in the leaf I gave you; that is his greeting to the Princess."

"Well, now, let us have something to eat," said the mother of the Winds; and accordingly they all sat down to partake of the roasted stag. The Prince sat next to the East Wind, and they soon became good friends.

"What Princess is that of whom you have been talking?" said the Prince, "and where is the Garden of Paradise?"

"Ha, ha!" said the East Wind, "do you wish to go there? Well, then, fly with me to-morrow; but I must tell you that no human being has been there since Adam and Eve's time. You have read of them in your Bible, I suppose?"

"Of course I have," answered the Prince.

"Well, when they were driven out of it, the Garden sank under the earth; but it still kept its warm sunshine, its balmy air, and all its beauty. The queen of the fairies makes it her abode, and there also is the Island of Bliss, where death never comes, and where life is so beautiful! I can take you there to-morrow if you seat yourself on my back. But don't talk any more now, for I wish to sleep." And then they all went to sleep.

When the Prince awoke in the morning, he was not a little astonished to find himself already far above the clouds. He was sitting on the back of the East Wind, who kept tight hold of him; and they flew so high that woods and meadows, rivers and seas, appeared like a large coloured map.

"Good-morning!" said the East Wind. "You may as well sleep a little longer, for there is not much to be seen in the flat country beneath us, unless you like to count the churches; they stand like little bits of chalk on the green board there below." By the green board he meant the fields and meadows.

"It was rude of me not to say good-bye to your mother and brothers," said the Prince.

"They'll excuse you as you were asleep," said the East Wind. And now they flew on faster than ever. How fast,

might be seen by the rustling of the trees as they passed them ; by the waves rising higher on the seas and lakes as they crossed them ; and by the large ships dipping down into the water like swans diving.

In the evening, when it became dark, the large towns had a most curious appearance. Lights were burning here and there ; it was just like watching the sparks on a burnt piece of paper as they go out one after the other. The Prince clapped his hands ; but the East Wind begged him to be quiet and to hold fast, as otherwise he might fall, and be left hanging from the top of a church steeple.

"Now you can see the Himalaya mountains," said the East Wind ; "they are the highest in Asia. We shall soon come now to the Garden of Paradise." So they turned more towards the South, and soon inhaled the fragrance of spices and flowers. Figs and pomegranates were growing wild ; blue and purple grapes hung from the vines. Here they descended and stretched themselves on the soft grass, while the flowers nodded to the Wind, as if they wished to say, "Welcome, welcome !"

"Are we now in the Garden of Paradise ?" asked the Prince.

"No, not yet," said the East Wind, "but we shall soon be there. Do you see yon rock, and the cavern beneath it, in front of which the vine branches hang like a large green curtain ? We must go through that. Wrap your cloak about you ; for though the sun scorches here, a step farther on and you will find it as cold as ice. The bird that is flying past the cave has one wing warm as summer, and the other as cold as winter."

"This, then, is the way to the Garden of Paradise !" said the Prince as they went into the cave. It was bitter cold ; but the cold did not last long, for the East Wind spread out his wings and they shone like the purest flame. What a cavern it was ! Large blocks of stone, from which water was trickling, hung in the strangest shapes above them. Sometimes it was so narrow that they had to creep along on their hands and knees, and at other times it was so lofty and wide, they might have been in the open air. It looked

like a chapel for the dead with its silent organ turned to stone.

"Surely we are going through the Valley of Death, to reach the Garden of Paradise?" said the Prince; but the East Wind pointed without a word to where the loveliest blue light was beaming to meet them. The rocks above them grew like mists, and at last were as clear and bright as white clouds in the moonlight. The air was balmy, fresh as a breeze among the mountains, and fragrant as one blowing through a valley of roses. A river, as clear as the air itself, flowed at their feet. Gold and silver fish swam in it; purple eels, that emitted blue sparks at every motion, were playing beneath its surface, and the broad leaves of the water-lilies that floated upon it shone with all the colours of the rainbow. The glowing orange-coloured flower itself seemed to draw its nourishment from the water, as the flame of a lamp draws its nourishment from the oil. A bridge of marble, of such cunning workmanship that it seemed made of lace and pearl, led over the water to the Island of Bliss, where bloomed the Garden of Paradise. The East Wind carried the Prince over. The flowers and leaves sang the sweetest songs about his childhood, in tones so soft and full that no human voice could match them. Whether they were palm trees or gigantic water-plants that grew here, the Prince knew not; but he had never before seen trees so large and full of sap; and hanging about them in long wreaths like the illuminations on the margins of old missals were the most singular creepers. Birds, flowers, and scrolls were mingled in the strangest confusion. Close to them, in the grass, stood a flock of peacocks, with their bright tails spread out. The Prince touched them, and found to his surprise that they were not birds but plants: they were plantain-leaves, that sparkled like the tails of peacocks. Lions and tigers, perfectly tame, sprang like cats over green hedges, from which there came a scent like that of the sweet-smelling flower of the olive. The timid wood-turtle, her plumage bright as the loveliest pearl, flapped her wings against the lion's mane; and the shy antelope stood by, and nodded his head as if he too wished to play.

And now came the Fairy of Paradise. Her garments shone like the sun, and her face, like that of a happy mother rejoicing over her child, beamed with delight. She was young and beautiful, and a train of lovely maidens followed her, each having a star sparkling in her hair. The East Wind gave her the leaf of the phoenix, and her eyes beamed with joy. She took the Prince by the hand, and led him into her palace, the walls of which were coloured like a tulip-leaf when it is held towards the sun. The roof was like a flower turned upside down, whose cup appeared the deeper the longer you looked into it. The Prince stepped to the window, and looked through one of the panes, and there he saw what seemed to be the tree of knowledge of good and evil, with the Serpent, and Adam and Eve, standing beside it. "Were they not driven out?" asked he. The Fairy smiled, and told him that Time had marked each event on a window pane in the form of a picture; but that these were not like common pictures, for everything in them lived; the leaves of the trees moved, and men came and went, as in a mirror. He looked through another pane, and there saw Jacob's dream; the ladder rose to Heaven, and angels with their large wings were moving up and down. Yes, everything that had happened in the world lived and moved in these panes of glass. Time only could have made such cunning pictures.

The Fairy now led the Prince into a spacious hall, whose walls seemed transparent and were covered with portraits, each more lovely than another. There were millions of blessed spirits, whose laughter and song made one sweet melody. In the midst of the hall stood a large tree with drooping branches. Golden apples, of different sizes, hung like oranges among the green leaves. This was the tree of knowledge of good and evil, of the fruit of which Adam and Eve did eat. From every leaf there dropped a bright red drop of dew, as though the tree wept tears of blood for our first parents' sin.

"Let us get into the boat," said the Fairy; "we shall find it refreshing. The boat is rocked on the swelling waves, without stirring from its place; and all the countries

in the world appear to glide past." And it was indeed strange to see. First came the high, snow-covered Alps, with their clouds and dark fir-trees. The horn's deep tones were heard, as was the voice of the herdsman singing merrily in the valley below. Then the banyan-trees bent their long drooping branches over the boat, coal-black swans glided over the water, and the strangest-looking animals and flowers were to be seen on the distant shore. It was Australia, the fifth division of the world, that now glided by with blue mountains in the background. And now came the hymns of priests, the dance of savages, accompanied by the noise of drums and the clang of bone trumpets. Egypt's cloud-aspiring pyramids, overthrown pillars, and sphinxes sailed by. The northern lights flashed over the extinct volcanoes of the North, in fire-works such as no mortal could imitate. The Prince was so happy! He saw a hundred times more than we have related here.

"And may I stay here always?" asked he.

"That depends upon yourself," answered the Fairy. "If you do not, like Adam, do what is forbidden, you may stay here always."

"I will not touch the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil," said the Prince; "there are a thousand fruits here quite as beautiful!"

"Examine your own heart," said the Princess, "and if you do not feel strong enough, return with the East Wind who brought you. He is just going to fly back, and he will not return for a hundred years. The time will pass away here as if it were only a hundred hours; but it is a long time for temptation and sin. Every evening when I leave you, I must invite you to 'Come with me!' I must beckon to you, but—beware of attending to my call. Come not with me, for every step will but increase the temptation. You will come into the hall where the tree of knowledge of good and evil stands; I shall sleep among its fragrant hanging branches; you will bend over me, and if you touch me, Paradise will sink beneath the earth, and be lost to you. The sharp wind of the

desert will whistle around, the cold rain will drip from your hair, sorrow and care will be your lot."

"I will stay here," said the Prince. And the East Wind kissed his forehead, and said: "Be strong, and we shall see each other again after a hundred years. Farewell, farewell!" Then he spread out his great wings which shone like lightning in harvest-time, or the northern lights in winter. "Farewell, farewell!" resounded from the trees and flowers. Storks and pelicans, like a long streaming ribbon, flew after him, accompanying him to the end of the garden.

"Now we will begin our dances," said the Fairy, "and when the sun is sinking, while I am dancing with you, you will see me beckon, you will hear me say, 'Come with me.' But do not follow. For a hundred years I must repeat this call to you every evening. Every day, if you resist, your strength will increase, till at last you will not even think of following. This evening will be the first time,—I have warned you!"

The Fairy then led him into a large hall, filled with white transparent lilies, whose yellow stamens formed little golden harps, sending forth clear, sweet tones resembling those of the flute.

The sun was setting; the whole sky was like pure gold; and the lilies shone amid the purple gleam, like the loveliest roses. The Prince saw the background of the hall opening, and there stood the tree of knowledge of good and evil in a splendour that dazzled his eyes. A song floated over him, sweet and gentle as his mother's voice. It seemed as though she said, "My child; my dear, dear child!"

Then the Fairy beckoned gracefully, saying, "Come with me, come with me!" and he rushed to her, forgetting his promise, even on this the first evening.

The fragrance, the spicy fragrance around, grew stronger; the harps sounded more sweetly; and it seemed as though the millions of smiling heads, in the hall where the tree of knowledge of good and evil was growing, nodded and sang, "Let us know everything! Man is lord of the earth!" And they were no longer tears of blood that dropped from

the leaves of the tree of knowledge of good and evil; they were red sparkling stars—so it appeared to him.

"Come with me, come with me!" Thus spoke those trembling tones; and the Fairy bent the boughs asunder, and in another moment was hidden within them.

"I have not yet sinned," said the Prince, "neither will I." He flung aside the boughs where she was sleeping—beautiful as only the Fairy of the Garden of Paradise could be. She smiled as she slept. He bent over her, and saw tears tremble behind her eyelashes. "Weepst thou for me?" whispered he. "Weep not, loveliest of beings!" Then he kissed the tears from her eyes; he kissed her lips. There was a fearful clap of thunder, more loud and deep than any that had ever been heard. All things rushed together in wild confusion; the charming Fairy vanished; the blooming Paradise sank so low! so low! The Prince saw it sink amid the darkness of night; it shone in the distance like a little glimmering star. A deadly coldness shot through his limbs; his eyes closed, and he lay for some time apparently dead.

The cold rain was beating upon his face; the sharp wind was blowing upon his forehead, when the Prince's consciousness returned.

"What have I done?" said he. "I have sinned like Adam; I have sinned, and Paradise has sunk low, beneath the earth!" And he opened his eyes and saw the star in the distance, the star which sparkled like his lost Paradise. It was the morning star.

He stood upright, and found himself in the wood, near the Cavern of the Winds. The mother of the Winds sat by his side; she looked very angry, and raised her hand. "Already, on the first evening!" said she. "Truly I expected it. Well, if you were my son, you should go forthwith into the sack."

"He shall go there!" said Death. He was a strong old man, with a scythe in his hand, and with large black wings. "He shall be laid in the coffin, but not yet. I shall suffer him to wander a little while upon the earth to repent of his sin. He may improve, he may grow good. I shall

return one day when he least expects it and lay him in the black coffin. If his head and heart are still full of sin, he will sink lower than the Garden of Paradise sank; but if he have become good and holy, I shall put the coffin on my head, and fly to the star yonder. The Garden of Paradise blooms there also; and he shall enter and remain in the star, that bright sparkling star, for ever!"

ELDER-TREE MOTHER

THERE was once a little boy who had caught a cold by getting his feet wet; how he did it no one could think, for the weather was perfectly fine and dry. His mother took off his clothes, put him to bed, and brought in the tea-pot, to make him a cup of good, warm elder-tea. Just then the kind old man, who lodged in the uppermost floor of the house, came in. He lived quite alone, poor man! for he had neither wife nor children of his own; but he loved children very much, and had so many charming stories and fairy tales to tell them that it was a pleasure to see him among them.

"Now drink your tea, like a good boy," said the mother, "and who knows but you may hear a story."

"Ah, yes, if one could only think of something new!" said the old man, smiling and nodding. "But how did the little one get his feet wet?"

"How, indeed?" said the mother. "That's just what nobody can make out."

"May not I have a story?" asked the boy.

"Yes," answered the old man; "if you can tell me exactly how deep the gutter is in the little street yonder, along which you go to school. I want to know that first."

"The water just comes half-way up to my knee," replied the boy, "but not unless I walk through the deep hole."

"Ah, then, that's where we got our feet wet!" said the old man. "And now, I suppose I should tell you a story, but really I don't know any more."

"But you can make up one in a moment," said the boy. "Mother says that everything you look at quickly becomes a fairy tale, and that everything you touch you turn into a story."

"Yes, but those stories and fairy tales are not good for much! The right sort come of their own accord; they tap at my forehead, and cry, 'Here we are!'"

"Will they not come and tap soon?" said the little boy; and his mother laughed, put some elder-flowers into the tea-pot, and poured boiling water over them.

"Tell me a story, do!" said the little boy.

"Yes, if a story would come of itself; but they are proud, and only come when they please. Hush!" cried he all of a sudden, "here we have it! Look out; now it is in the tea-pot!"

The little boy looked at the tea-pot. He saw the lid rise higher and higher, and elder-flowers spring forth as fresh and white as snow, and long branches sprouted from the spout, spreading on all sides, and growing larger and larger, till at last there stood by the bedside a most charming elder-bush, a perfect tree, some of its boughs stretching over the bed and thrusting the curtains aside. Oh, how it blossomed and how sweet it smelled! And in the midst of the tree sat a kind-looking old dame, wearing a wonderful dress. It was green like the elder-leaves, and had large white elder-flower clusters spreading all over it. One could not be sure whether it were made of some woven stuff or of real, living green leaves and flowers.

"What is her name?" asked the little boy.

"Why, those old Greeks and Romans used to call her Dryad," answered the old man, "but we don't understand those outlandish names. The sailors have a much better name for her; they call her Little Elder-Tree Mother, and that suits her very well. Now, you must attend to her. Listen, and keep looking at the pretty elder-tree.

"Just such another large, blooming tree as this stands outside in the corner of a poor little yard. Under this tree there sat, one bright, sunny afternoon, two old people—a very, very old sailor, and his very, very old wife. They were great-grandparents already, and would soon have to keep their golden wedding, but they could not exactly remember on what day it would fall. Elder-Tree Mother sat in the tree above them, looking as pleased as she does now. 'Ah, I

know when the golden wedding-day is!' said she; but they did not hear her, they were talking over old times.

"'Do you remember?' said the sailor, 'when we were quite little, and used to be always running and playing about in this very yard where we are now sitting, and how we stuck slips in the ground to make a garden?'

"'To be sure I remember!' replied the old woman. 'We watered the slips every day, and one of them was an elder-slip and took root, and it put out its green shoots till it grew up to be this large tree that we old folks are now sitting under.'

"'So it did!' said the sailor; 'and in the corner yonder used to stand the water-butt, where I sailed my boats. I cut them out with my own hand. Such splendid boats they were! To be sure, I have seen a different kind of sailing since then.'

"'Yes, but first we went to school,' said his wife. 'And then we were confirmed; we both of us cried, I remember. And in the afternoon of that day we went hand in hand up to the Round Tower, and saw the view round Copenhagen and across the sea; and then we went to Fredericksberg, where the King and Queen were sailing about in their beautiful boat.'

"'But I had to go away, and sail in very different parts,' said the old sailor, 'and for many, many years I was away on those long voyages!'

"'Yes, and how often I wept for you!' said she. 'I thought you must be dead and lying drowned at the bottom of the sea. Many a night I got up to look at the weather-cock, to see if the wind had turned; and turn it did, over and over again, but you came not back. There is one day I shall never forget. It was pouring with rain. The dust-men had come to the house where I was in service. I went down with the dust-box and stood for a little near the dust-bin; and while I stood the postman came up and gave me a letter. It was from you. I tore it open and read it. I laughed and cried by turns, I was so happy. The letter told me you were in the warm countries, where the coffee-trees grow. What charming countries those must be! It

told me so many things; and there I stood at the door of the dust-bin reading it, while the rain kept pouring down in torrents. Just then somebody came up behind me, and took hold of me——

“‘Yes, indeed, and didn’t you give him a good box on the ear! Didn’t his ear tingle after it!’

“‘But I did not know that it was you. You had arrived as soon as your letter; and you were so handsome!—but that you are still,—and you had a large yellow silk handkerchief in your pocket and a new hat on your head. Oh, what weather it was! the streets were quite flooded.’

“‘And then we were married,’ said the sailor; ‘don’t you remember that? And then we had our first little boy; and after him came Marie, and Niels, and Peter, and Hans Christian.’

“‘Yes,’ said she, ‘all grown up now, and all respectable men and women, whom every one likes.’

“‘And now their children too, they have little ones,’ added the old sailor. ‘Yes, they are fine healthy babies, those great-grandchildren of ours! I fancy it was just about this time of year that we were married.’

“‘Yes, to-day is your golden wedding-day!’ said Elder-Tree Mother, bending down her head to the old people; but they thought it was a neighbour speaking, and they gave little heed, but looked at each other, and clasped each other’s hand. Presently the children and grandchildren, who knew that this was the golden wedding-day, came. They had come that very morning to congratulate their parents, but the old people had quite forgotten that, although they could remember so clearly things that had happened half a century before. And the elder-blossoms smelled so sweetly, and the sun, which was near setting, shed such a rosy light on the old couple’s faces; while the youngest of the grandchildren danced round them, shouting with glee that they were all to have a feast to-night, and hot potatoes for supper. And Elder-Tree Mother nodded her head to them from the tree, and shouted ‘Hurrah!’ with the others.”

“But that’s not a fairy tale,” said the little boy who had been listening to the story.

"Not till you understand it," said the old story-teller. "Let us ask Elder-Tree Mother to explain it."

"No! That was not a fairy tale," said Elder-Tree Mother; "but now you shall have one, and a true one too. The most charming fairy tales spring out of the common events of everyday life just as my pretty elder-bush has grown out of the tea-pot!" And then she took the little boy out of bed, pillowing his head upon her bosom, and the elder-boughs so richly laden with blossoms twined around them, so that they seemed to be sitting in a thick-leaved, fragrant arbour. And the arbour flew away with them through the air in the most delightful way. Elder-Tree Mother had, all at once, changed into a pretty and graceful young girl. Her dress was the same as Elder-Tree Mother had worn; but on her bosom rested a real elder-flower cluster. Her eyes were large and blue, and charming to behold, and a garland of elder-flowers was wreathed among her curling flaxen hair. She and the boy kissed each other, and immediately they were of the same age, and were very happy.

Hand in hand they walked out of the arbour, and found themselves in the pretty flower-garden of their home. On the lawn they found their father's walking-stick tied up. For the children there was life in the stick. As soon as they got astride it, the bright knob became a fiery, neighing head, a long black mane fluttered to and fro in the wind, and four strong slender legs shot out. Their new steed was a spirited creature, and galloped with them round the grass plot. "Hurrah! Now we will ride many miles away," said the boy; "let us ride to the dear old manor house we went to last year." Round and round the lawn they rode, and the little girl, who, as we know, was no other than Elder-Tree Mother, kept crying out all the while, "Now we are in the country. See yon pretty cottage! The elder-tree is spreading its branches over it, and the cock is marching about and scratching for the hens. See how he struts! Now we are close to the church. It stands high on the hill, among the great oak-trees. Now we are at the smithy; the fire is blazing, and the half-clad men

are banging away with their hammers, and the sparks are flying about. Away, away, to the old manor house!" And all that the little maid spoke of flew past them. The boy saw it all, and still they only rode round and round the lawn. Then they played in one of the walks, and raked up the ground to make out a tiny garden for themselves; and the girl took one of the elder-blossoms out of her hair, and planted it, and it grew up, just as the elder-sprig grew which was planted by the old sailor and his wife when they were little ones. Then the little girl threw her arms round the little boy's waist, and away they flew over all the country. Spring deepened into summer, and summer mellowed into autumn, and autumn faded into pale, cold winter, and a thousand pictures were mirrored in the boy's eyes and heart. And wherever they flew, the sweet strong perfume of the elder-tree floated round them. The little boy could smell the roses in the gardens he flew past, and the fresh beech-trees; but the elder was the sweetest of all, for the flowers lay on the little maiden's heart, where, in their flight, he so often leaned his head.

"How beautiful is spring!" cried the little girl, as they stood together among the fresh green of the beech-wood, while the sweet-scented thyme grew at their feet, and the pale-tinted anemones looked their loveliest amid the soft greens of the grass. "Oh, would it were always spring!"

"How beautiful is summer!" said she again, as they flew by a castle telling of olden times, and saw the high walls and pointed gables mirrored in the moat beneath, where the swans were floating, and peeped up the cool green avenues. A sea of green corn waved to and fro in the fields. Tiny red and yellow blossoms peeped out of the ditches, and the hedges were covered with wild hops and white bindweed. In the evening the moon rose large and round, and the meadows were odorous with the scent of haystacks. Such scenes are never to be forgotten.

"How beautiful is autumn!" said the little maiden also. The sky seemed higher, and of a deeper blue; the woods became flushed with the richest crimsons, greens, and yellows. The hounds dashed by in full cry; flocks of wild

fowl flew screaming over the Hun's graves where the brambles twined round the old stones. Far away lay the deep blue sea, dotted with white sails. Old women, girls, and children sat in a barn, picking hops and putting them into a great cask. The young and the old told stories of fairies and enchantments. What could be pleasanter than this?

"How beautiful is winter!" she said. The trees stood around them all covered with hoar-frost. The snow crackled beneath the feet as if every one had on new boots, and, one after another, stars shot across the sky. The Christmas-tree was lighted up in the parlour; everybody had had presents given him, and everybody was in good humour. In the farm-houses could be heard the sound of fiddles; and there were games for apples, so that even the poorest child might say, "How beautiful is winter!"

And beautiful indeed were all the scenes that the fairy maiden showed to the little boy, and still the elder-perfume floated round them, and ever over them waved the red flag with the white cross under which the old mariner had sailed. And the boy, now grown to be a youth, felt that he must go out to seek his fortune in the world. At their parting the maiden took the cluster of elder-blossoms from her bosom, and gave it to him. And he kept it carefully between the leaves of his hymn-book, and when he was in foreign lands he never took up the book but it opened upon the place where the flowers of memory lay, and the oftener he looked at it the fresher, he fancied, it became. He seemed, while he looked at it, to breathe the sweetness of his native woods, and a hundred fair visions of the past flitted unbidden through his mind.

Many years had passed, and he was now an old man sitting with his old wife under a flowering tree. They held each other by the hand, and they talked of old times, and of their golden wedding-day. The little maiden, with the blue eyes and the elder-blossoms in her hair, sat on the tree above, and nodded to them, saying, "To-day is your golden wedding-day!" and then she took two flower-clusters out of her hair and kissed them twice. At the first kiss they shone like silver; at the second, like gold; and when she



"THEY SAT LIKE A KING AND QUEEN"

had set them on the two old people's heads, each cluster became a gold crown. And thus they sat like a King and Queen, under the fragrant elder-tree, and the old man began to tell his wife the story about Elder-Tree Mother. It had been told him when a little boy, and it seemed to them both that great part of the story was very like their own, and they liked that part far the best.

"Yes, so it is!" said the little maiden in the tree. "Some call me Elder-Tree Mother, others call me a Dryad, but my proper name is Memory. Here I sit in the tree whilst it grows and grows; I never forget, I remember all things well. Now let me see if you still have your flower safe?"

The old man opened his hymn-book, and there lay the elder-flower, as fresh as though it had but just been laid between the leaves. Memory nodded her head, and the two old people with their gold crowns sat under the tree, their faces flushed with the red evening sunlight. They closed their eyes, and then—and then—why, then there was an end of the tale.

The little boy lay in his bed; he did not rightly know whether he had been dreaming all this, or whether it had been told him. The tea-pot stood on the table, but no elder-tree was growing out of it, and his friend, the old story-teller, was just on the point of going out at the door. Whilst the boy was rubbing his eyes he was gone.

"How beautiful that was!" said the little boy. "Mother, I have been to the warm countries."

"Yes, I have no doubt of that!" replied the mother; "after you had drunk two full cups of hot elder-tea, you were likely enough to get into the warm countries!" And she covered him up well for fear he should get chilled. "You have had a good sound sleep while I sat disputing with him as to whether it were a fairy tale, or a real, true history."

And where is Elder-Tree Mother?" asked the boy.

She is in the tea-pot," said his mother, "and there she may stay."

THE WILD SWANS

FAR, far away, in the land to which the swallows fly in our winter-time, there dwelt a King who had eleven sons and one daughter, named Elise. The eleven brothers were Princes, and went to school with stars on their breasts and swords by their sides; they wrote on golden copy-books with diamond pens, and learnt by heart just as they read. In short, it was easy to see that they were Princes. Their sister Elise used to sit upon a little glass stool, and had a picture-book which had cost the half of a kingdom. Oh, the children were so happy! But happy they were not to remain always.

Their father, who was the King of the whole country, married a wicked Queen who was not at all kind to the poor children. They found this out on the first day after the marriage. There were great festivities at the palace; and the children played at receiving company, but, instead of letting them have, as usual, as many cakes and burnt apples as were left, the Queen gave them only some sand in a tea-cup, and told them to play at make-believe with that.

The week after, she sent the little Elise to be brought up by some peasants in the country, and before long she told the King so many falsehoods about the poor Princes, that he would have nothing more to do with them.

"Away, out into the world, and take care of yourselves," said the wicked Queen; "fly away in the form of great speechless birds." But she could not make them ugly, as she wished to do, for they were changed into eleven white Swans. Sending forth a strange cry, they flew out of the palace windows, over the park and over the wood.

It was still early in the morning when they passed the peasant's cottage where Elise lay sleeping. They hovered

over the roof, stretched their long necks, and flapped their wings; but no one either heard or saw them, so they were forced to fly away. They flew up to the clouds and out into the wide world, far away into the dark forest, which stretched as far as the seashore.

Poor little Elise stood in the peasant's cottage, playing with a green leaf, for she had no other plaything. She pricked a hole in the leaf and peeped through it at the sun, and then she fancied she saw her brothers' bright eyes, and whenever the warm sunbeams shone full upon her cheeks, she thought of her brothers' kisses.

One day was just like another. When the wind blew through the thick hedge of rose-trees in front of the house, she would whisper to the roses, "Who is more beautiful than you?" And the roses would shake their heads and say, "Elise." And when the peasant's wife sat on Sundays at the door of her cottage reading her hymn-book, the wind would rustle the leaves and say to the book, "Who is more pious than you?" And the hymn-book would answer, "Elise." And what the roses and the hymn-book said, was no more than the truth.

When she was fifteen years old she had to go home, and when the Queen saw how beautiful she was, she hated her more than ever, and would willingly have turned her, like her brothers, into a Wild Swan; but she dared not do so, because the King wished to see his daughter.

Early one morning the Queen went into the bathroom which was made of marble, and fitted up with soft pillows and the gayest carpets. She took three toads with her and kissed them, and said to one, "When Elise comes to the bath settle thou upon her head that she may become dull and sleepy like thee." "Settle thou upon her forehead," said she to another, "and let her become ugly like thee, so that her father may not know her again." And "Do thou place thyself upon her bosom," whispered she to the third, "that her heart may become evil, and a torment to herself." She then put the toads into the clear water, which immediately turned green, and having called Elise, took off her clothes and made her get into the bath. As she dipped

her head under the water, one toad settled among her hair, another on her forehead, and the third upon her bosom. But Elise seemed not at all aware of it; and when she rose up three poppies were seen swimming on the water. Had not the animals been poisonous and kissed by a witch, they would have been changed into roses because they had rested on Elise's head and heart. She was too good for magic to have any power over her.

When the Queen perceived this, she rubbed walnut juice all over the maiden's skin, so that it became quite swarthy, smeared a nasty salve over her lovely face, and entangled her long thick hair, till it was impossible to recognise the beautiful Elise. When her father saw her, he was shocked, and said she could not be his daughter. No one knew her but the mastiff and the swallows; and they were only poor animals and could not say anything.

Poor Elise wept, and thought of her eleven brothers who were all away. In great distress she stole away and wandered the whole day over fields and marshes, till she came to the great forest. She knew not where to go, but she was so sad, and longed so much to see her brothers, who like herself had been driven out into the world, that she made up her mind to seek for them and find them.

She had not been long in the forest when night came on, and she lost her way amid the darkness. So she lay down on the soft moss, said her evening prayer, and leaned her head against the trunk of a tree. It was very still in the forest; the air was mild, and from the grass and mould around gleamed the green lights of many hundred glow-worms; and when Elise touched one of the branches hanging over her, bright insects fell down upon her like falling stars.

All the night long she dreamed of her brothers. It seemed to her that they were all children again, played together, wrote with diamond pens upon golden copy-books, and looked at the pictures in the beautiful book that had cost half of a kingdom. But they did not as formerly make straight strokes and pot-hooks upon the copy-books. No; they wrote of the noble deeds they had done, and the strange things they had seen. In the picture-book, too,

everything seemed alive; the birds sang, and men and women stepped from the pages and talked to Elise and her brothers, jumping back into their places, however, when she turned over the leaves, so that the pictures did not get confused.

When Elise awoke, the sun was already high in the heavens. She could not see it, for the tall trees twined their thickly-leaved branches so closely together that, as the sunbeams played upon them, they looked like a golden veil waving to and fro. The air was fragrant, and the birds almost perched upon Elise's shoulders. She heard the noise of water, and when she went towards it she found a pool, formed by several springs, with the prettiest pebbles at the bottom. Bushes were growing thickly round, but the deer had trodden a broad path through them, and by this path Elise went down to the water's edge. The water was so clear that had not the boughs and bushes around been moved to and fro by the wind she might have fancied they were painted upon the smooth surface, so distinctly was each little leaf mirrored upon it, whether glowing in the sunlight or lying in the shade.

When Elise saw her own face in the water she was frightened, so brown and ugly did it look; but when she wetted her little hand, and rubbed her brow and eyes, the white skin again appeared. So she took off her clothes, stepped into the fresh water and bathed herself, and in the whole world there was not a king's daughter more beautiful than she then appeared.

After she had again dressed herself, and had braided her long hair, she went to the bubbling spring; caught some water in the hollow of her hand and drank it, and then wandered farther into the forest. She knew not where she was going, but she thought of her brothers, and of the good God who, she felt, would never forsake her. He it was who made the wild apples grow to feed the hungry, and who showed her a tree whose boughs bent under the weight of their fruit. She made her noonday meal under the shade of this tree, then propped up the boughs, and walked on into the gloomiest depths of the forest. It was so still that

she could hear her own footsteps, and the rustling of each little withered leaf that was crushed beneath her feet. Not a bird was to be seen, not a sunbeam penetrated the thick foliage; and the tall stems of the trees stood so close together, that when she looked straight before her she seemed enclosed by trellis-work upon trellis-work. Oh! there was a solitariness in this forest such as Elise had never known before.

And the night was so dark! not a single glow-worm sent forth its light from the moss. Sorrowfully she lay down to sleep. Then it seemed to her as though the boughs above her opened, and she saw the angel of God smiling down upon her, and a thousand little cherubs all around him. When she awoke in the morning she could not tell whether this was a dream, or whether it had really happened.

She walked on a little farther, and met an old woman with a basket full of berries. The old woman gave her some of the berries, and Elise asked if she had not seen eleven Princes ride through the wood.

"No," said the old woman, "but I saw yesterday eleven Swans with golden crowns on their heads swim down the brook near here."

Then she led Elise on a little farther to a sloping bank at the foot of which ran a little brook. The trees on each side stretched their long leafy branches towards each other, and where they could not unite naturally the roots had torn themselves from the earth, so that the branches might mingle their foliage as they hung over the water.

Elise bade the old woman farewell, and wandered by the side of the stream till she came to the place where it reached the open sea.

The great, the beautiful sea lay before the maiden's eyes, but not a ship, not a boat was to be seen. How was she to go on? She noticed how the numberless little stones on the shore had all been washed into a round form by the waves; glass, iron, stone, everything that lay scattered there had been moulded into shape, and yet the water which had done this was much softer than Elise's delicate little hand.



B 95t

HE LAID HIS HEAD IN HER LAP, AND SHE STROKED
HIS WHITE WINGS

"The water rolls on unweariedly," said she, "till it smooths all that is hard; I will be no less unwearied! Thank you for the lesson you have given me, ye bright rolling waves; some day, my heart tells me, you shall carry me to my dear brothers!"

Upon the wet sea-grass lay eleven white swan-feathers. Elise gathered them up and put them together. Drops of water hung about them, whether dew or tears she could not tell. She was quite alone on the seashore, but she did not mind that, for the sea was full of interest to her; it was always moving, always changing, always new, and so gave her more pleasure in a few hours than the gentle inland waters could have given in a whole year. When a black cloud passed over the sky, it seemed as if the sea would say, "I too can look dark"; and then the wind would blow and the waves fling out their white foam; but when the clouds shone with a bright red tint, and the winds were asleep, the sea became like a rose-leaf now green, now white. Yet however smooth its glassy surface was, there was always a slight motion near the shore as the waves rose and fell like the breast of a sleeping child.

At sunset Elise saw eleven Wild Swans with golden crowns on their heads fly towards the land; they flew one behind another, looking like a long white ribbon. Elise climbed the slope from the shore and hid herself behind a bush. The Swans came down close to her, and flapped their long white wings.

As the sun sank beneath the water, the Swans' feathers fell off, and beside her stood eleven handsome Princes, her brothers. She uttered a loud cry, for although they were very much changed, Elise knew and felt that they must be her brothers. Then she threw herself into their arms, calling them by their names, and the Princes were very happy to see their sister, now grown so tall and so beautiful! They laughed and wept, and soon told each other how wickedly their step-mother had acted towards them.

"We brothers," said the eldest, "fly or swim as long as the sun is in the sky, but when it sets we appear again in our human form; we are therefore bound to look out

for a safe resting-place before sunset, for if we were flying among the clouds at the time we should fall down into the sea when we recovered our human shape. We do not dwell here. A land quite as beautiful as this lies on the other side of the sea, but it is far off. To reach it we have to cross the deep waters, and there is no island midway on which we may rest at night. One little solitary rock rises from the waves, and upon it we only find room enough to stand side by side. There we spend the night in our human form; and when the sea is rough the foam dashes over us. But we thank God even for this rock, for without it we should never be able to visit our dear native country. Only once in the year are we allowed to make this visit to our home. We require two of the longest days for our flight, and can remain here only eleven days, during which time we fly over the large forest, whence we can see the palace in which we were born, where our father dwells, and the tower of the church in which our mother was buried. Here even the trees and bushes seem of kin to us. The wild horses still race over the plains as in the days of our childhood. The charcoal-burner still sings the same old tunes to which we used to dance in our youth. This is our fatherland to which we are drawn by ties of love; and here we have found thee, thou dear little sister! We have yet two days longer to stay here, and then we must fly over the sea to a land beautiful indeed, but not our fatherland. How shall we take thee with us? we have neither ship nor boat!"

"How can I break this spell?" said the sister. And so they went on talking almost the whole of the night. They slept only a few hours.

Elise was awakened by the rustling of wings, and saw the Swans fluttering above her. Her brothers were again changed into Swans. For some time they flew round in wider and wider circles, till at last they flew far away. One of them remained behind; it was the youngest. He laid his head in her lap and she stroked his white wings; they remained the whole day together. Towards evening the others came back, and when the sun was set,

again they stood on the firm ground in their natural form.

"To-morrow we shall fly away," they said, "and may not return for a year, but we cannot leave you here. Have you courage to go with us? Our arms are strong enough to bear you through the forest, and will not our wings be strong enough to fly with you over the sea?"

"Yes, take me with you," said Elise.

They spent the whole night in weaving a mat of the pliant willow bark and the tough rushes, and their mat was thick and strong. Elise lay down upon it, and when the sun had risen, and the brothers had been turned again into Wild Swans, they seized the mat with their beaks and flew up high among the clouds with their dear sister. She was still sleeping, and, as the sunbeams shone full upon her face, one of the Swans flew over her head and shaded her with his broad wings.

They were already far from land when Elise awoke. She thought she was still dreaming, so strange did it seem to her to feel herself being carried so high up in the air over the sea. By her side lay a cluster of pretty ripe berries and a bundle of sweet roots. Her youngest brother had gathered them for her and laid them there, and she thanked him with a smile, for she knew him as the Swan who flew over her head and shaded her with his wings.

They soared so high that the first ship they saw beneath them seemed like a white sea-gull hovering over the water. Elise saw behind her a large cloud, which looked like a mountain, and on it were gigantic shadows of herself and the eleven Swans; altogether it formed a picture more beautiful than any she had ever yet seen. Soon, however, the sun rose higher, the cloud was left behind, and the shadowy picture disappeared.

The whole day they flew on like a winged arrow through the air, but yet they went slower than usual, for they had their sister to carry. There seemed a storm brewing, and the evening was drawing near. Anxiously did Elise watch the sun. It was setting, and still the solitary rock could not be seen. It appeared to her that the Swans plied their

trees, and castle all disappeared, and in their place stood twenty stately churches with high towers and pointed windows—she fancied she heard the organ play, but it was only the murmur of the sea. As they drew nearer to these churches they too changed into a large fleet sailing under them. She looked down and saw it was only a sea-mist passing rapidly over the water. Such strange scenes kept floating before her eyes, till at last she saw the actual land to which they were going with its blue mountains, its cedar woods, its towns, and castles. Long before sunset Elise sat down among the mountains, in front of a large cavern where delicate young creepers grew so thickly around that the ground appeared covered with gay embroidered carpets.

“Now we shall see what thou wilt dream of to-night!” said her youngest brother, as he showed her the chamber where she was to sleep.

“Oh that I could dream how you might be freed from the spell!” said she; and she could think of nothing else. She prayed most earnestly for God’s help, nay, even in her dreams she continued praying, and it appeared to her that she was flying up high in the air towards the castle of the fairy Morgana. The fairy came forward to meet her, radiant and beautiful, and yet she thought she looked like the old woman who had given her berries in the forest, and told her of the Swans with golden crowns.

“You can release your brothers,” said she; “but have you courage and patience enough? The water is indeed softer than your delicate hands, and yet can mould the hard stones to its will, but then it cannot feel the pain which your tender fingers will feel; it has no heart, and cannot suffer the anxiety and grief which you must suffer. Do you see these stinging-nettles I have in my hand? There are many round the cave where you are sleeping; only those that grow there or on the graves in the churchyard are of use, remember that! You must pluck them though they sting your hand; you must trample on them with your feet, and get yarn from them, and with this yarn you must weave eleven shirts with long sleeves. When they are all made, throw them over the eleven Wild Swans, and the spell will

be broken. But mark this: from the moment that you begin your work till it is completed, even should it occupy you for years, you must not speak a word. The first syllable that escapes your lips will fall like a dagger into the hearts of your brothers. On your tongue depends their life. Mark well all this!"

At the same moment the fairy touched Elise's hands with a nettle, which made them burn like fire, and Elise awoke. It was broad daylight, and close to her lay a nettle like the one she had seen in her dream. She fell upon her knees, thanked God, and then went out of the cave to begin her work. She plucked with her own delicate hands the ugly stinging-nettles. They burned large blisters on her hands and arms, but she bore the pain willingly in the hope of freeing her dear brothers. Then she trampled on the nettles with her naked feet, and spun the green yarn.

At sunset came her brothers. Elise's silence quite frightened them; they thought it must be the effect of some fresh spell of their wicked step-mother; but when they saw her blistered hands, they found out what their sister was doing for their sake. The youngest brother wept, and when his tears fell upon her hands, Elise felt no more pain, and the blisters disappeared.

The whole night she spent in her work, for she could not rest till she had released her brothers. All the following day she sat in her solitude, for the Swans had flown away; but never had time passed so quickly. One shirt was ready; and she now began the second.

Suddenly a hunting-horn echoed among the mountains and made her start with fear. The noise came nearer, she heard the hounds barking. In great terror she fled into the cave, bound up into a bundle the nettles she had gathered and combed, and sat down upon it.

She had just done so when a large dog sprang out from the bushes. Two others immediately followed; they barked loudly, ran away, and then returned. It was not long before the hunters stood in front of the cave. The handsomest among them was the King of that country; and he stepped up to Elise, for never had he seen a lovelier maiden.

"How came you here, beautiful child?" said he. Elise shook her head; she dared not speak, a word might have cost her the life of her brothers; and she hid her hands under her apron lest the King should see how she was suffering.

"Come with me," said he. "You must not stay here! If you are as good as you are beautiful, I will dress you in velvet and silk, I will put a gold crown upon your head, and you shall dwell in my palace!" So he lifted her upon his horse, while she wept and wrung her hands; but the King said, "I only desire your happiness! You shall thank me for this some day!" and away he rode over mountains and valleys, holding her on his horse in front, whilst the other hunters followed. When the sun set, the King's capital with its churches and domes lay before them, and the King led Elise into the palace, where, in a high marble hall, fountains were playing, and the walls and ceiling were covered with the most beautiful paintings. But Elise cared not for all this splendour; she wept and mourned in silence, even whilst some female attendants dressed her in royal robes, wove costly pearls into her hair, and drew soft gloves over her blistered hands.

And now as she stood before them in her rich dress, her beauty was so dazzling, that the courtiers all bowed low before her, and the King chose her for his bride, although the Archbishop shook his head, and whispered that the "beautiful lady of the wood was only a witch, who had blinded their eyes and bewitched the King's heart."

But the King did not listen; he ordered that music should be played. The most costly dishes were served up, and the loveliest maidens danced round the bride. She was led through fragrant gardens into magnificent halls, but not a smile was seen to play upon her lips or beam from her eyes. She looked the very picture of grief. The King then opened a small room next her bedroom. The floor was covered with costly green tapestry, and looked exactly like the cave in which she had been found. On it lay the bundle of yarn which she had spun from the nettles, and by the wall hung the shirt she had made. One of the hunters

had brought all this, thinking there must be something wonderful in it.

"Here you may dream of your former home," said the King. "Here is the work you were doing there. Amid all your present splendour it may sometimes give you pleasure to fancy yourself there again."

When Elise saw what was so dear to her heart, she smiled, and the blood came back to her cheeks. She thought her brothers might still be freed from the spell, and she kissed the King's hand. He pressed her to his heart, and ordered the bells of all the churches in the city to be rung, to announce their marriage. The beautiful dumb maiden of the wood was to become the Queen of the land.

The Archbishop whispered evil words in the King's ear, but he paid no heed to them. He and Elise were married, and the Archbishop himself was obliged to put the crown upon her head. In his rage he pressed the narrow rim so firmly on her forehead that it hurt her; but a heavier weight of sorrow for her brothers lay upon her heart, and she did not feel bodily pain. She was still silent, because a single word would have killed her brothers; but her eyes beamed with heartfelt love to the King, so good and handsome, who had done so much to make her happy. She loved him more and more every day. Oh! how she wished she might tell him her sorrows; but she must remain silent, she could not speak until her work was finished! So she stole away every night, and went into the little room that was fitted up like the cave. There she worked at her shirts; but by the time she had begun the seventh, all her yarn was spent.

She knew that the nettles she needed grew in the churchyard, but she must gather them herself; and how to get them she knew not.

"Oh, what is the pain in my fingers compared with the anguish my heart suffers!" thought she. "I must venture to the churchyard; the good God will still watch over me!"

Fearful as though she were about to do something wrong, one moonlight night she crept down to the garden, and through the long avenues into the lonely road leading to

the churchyard. She saw sitting on one of the broadest tombstones a number of ugly old witches. They took off their ragged clothes as if they were going to bathe, and digging with their long lean fingers into the fresh grass, drew up the dead bodies and devoured the flesh. Elise was obliged to pass close by them, and the witches fixed their wicked eyes upon her; ~~but she repeated her prayer,~~ gathered the stinging-nettles, and took them back with her into the palace. One person only had seen her. It was the Archbishop; he was awake when others slept. Now he felt sure that all was not right about the Queen: she must be a witch, who had, by her magic, won the hearts of the King and all the people.

In the Confessional he told the King what he had seen, and what he feared; and when the slanderous words came from his lips, the sculptured images of the saints shook their heads as though they would say, "It is untrue, Elise is innocent!" But the Archbishop explained the omen quite otherwise; he thought it was a testimony against her, and that the holy images shook their heads at hearing of her sin.

Two large tears rolled down the King's cheeks; and he returned home in doubt. He pretended to sleep at night, though sleep never visited him; and he noticed that Elise rose from her bed every night, and every time he followed her secretly and saw her enter her little room.

His face grew darker every day. Elise perceived it; though she did not know the cause. She was much pained; and besides, what did she not suffer in her heart for her brothers! Her bitter tears ran down on the royal velvet and purple, looking like bright diamonds; and all who saw the grandeur that surrounded her wished themselves in her place. She had now nearly finished her work, only one shirt was wanting. Unfortunately, yarn was wanting also; she had not a single nettle left. Once more, only this one time, she must go to the churchyard and gather a few handfuls. She shuddered when she thought of the solitary walk and of the horrid witches, but her resolution was as firm as her trust in God.

Elise went, and the King and the Archbishop followed her. They saw her disappear at the churchyard door; and when they came nearer they saw the witches sitting on the tombstones as Elise had seen them; and the King turned away, for he believed her whose head had rested on his bosom that very evening to be amongst them. "Let the people judge her!" said he. And the people condemned her to be burnt.

She was now dragged from the King's splendid palace into a dark, damp prison, where the wind whistled through the grated window. Instead of velvet and silk, they gave her the bundle of nettles she had gathered. On that she had to lay her head, and the shirts she had woven had to serve her as mattress and counterpane. But they could not have given her anything more welcome to her; and she continued her work, at the same time praying earnestly to God. The boys sang shameful songs about her in front of her prison; not a soul comforted her with one word of love.

Towards evening she heard the rustling of Swans' wings at the grating. It was the youngest of her brothers, who had at last found her, and she sobbed aloud for joy, although she knew that probably she had only one night to live; but then her work was almost finished and her brothers were near.

The Archbishop came in to spend the last hour with her as he had promised the King he would; but she shook her head and begged him with looks and signs to go away; for this night she must finish her work, or all she had suffered, her pain, her anxiety, her sleepless nights, would be in vain. The Archbishop went away with many angry words; but poor Elise knew herself to be perfectly innocent, and went on with her work.

Little mice ran busily about and dragged the nettles to her feet, wishing to help her; and a thrush perched on the iron bars of the window, and sang all night as merrily as he could, that she might not lose courage.

An hour before sunrise the eleven brothers stood before the palace gates, and begged to be shown to the King. But it could not be, they were told; it was still night, the

King was asleep, and they dared not wake him. They prayed, they threatened in vain. The guard came up; at last the King himself stepped out to ask what was the matter; but at that moment the sun rose, the brothers could be seen no longer, and eleven white Swans flew away over the palace.

The people poured forth from the gates of the city to see the witch burnt. One wretched horse drew the cart in which Elise sat. She wore a coarse frock of sackcloth, her beautiful long hair hung loosely over her shoulders, her cheeks were of a deathly paleness; but her lips moved gently, and her fingers wove the green yarn, for even on her way to her cruel death she did not give up her work. The ten shirts lay at her feet, she was now labouring to complete the eleventh. The crowd insulted her.

"Look at the witch, how she mutters! she has no psalm-book in her hand,—no, there she sits with her hateful juggling! Tear it from her, tear it into a thousand pieces!"

And they all crowded about her, and were on the point of snatching away the shirts, when eleven white Swans came flying towards the cart, settled all round her, and flapped their wings. The crowd gave way in terror.

"It is a sign from Heaven! she is certainly innocent!" whispered some; they dared not say so aloud.

The executioner now took hold of her hand to lift her out of the cart, but she hastily threw the eleven shirts over the Swans, and eleven handsome Princes appeared in their place. The youngest had, however, only one arm, and a wing instead of the other, for one sleeve in his shirt had not been quite finished.

"Now I may speak," said she; "I am innocent!"

And the people who had seen what had happened bowed before her as before a saint. She, however, sank lifeless in her brothers' arms; suspense, fear, and grief had quite exhausted her.

"Yes, she is innocent," said her eldest brother, and he told their wonderful story. Whilst he spoke a fragrance as from millions of roses spread itself around, for every piece

of wood in the funeral pile had taken root and sent forth branches, and a hedge of blooming red roses surrounded Elise, and above all the others blossomed a flower of a dazzling white colour, bright as a star. The King plucked it and laid it on Elise's bosom, and then she awoke with peace and joy in her heart.

And all the church bells began to ring of their own accord, and birds flew to the spot in swarms, and there was a joyous procession back to the palace, such as no king has ever seen equalled.

THE RED SHOES

THERE was once a little girl, very pretty and delicate, but so poor that in summer she always went barefoot, and in winter wore large wooden shoes that made her little ankles quite red and sore.

In the same village lived an old shoemaker's wife. One day she made out of some old pieces of red cloth a pair of little shoes. They were clumsy certainly, but they fitted the little girl fairly well, and she gave them to her. The little girl's name was Karen.

It was on the day of her mother's funeral that the red shoes were given to Karen. They were not at all proper for mourning, but she had no others, and in them she walked with bare legs behind the poor deal coffin.

Just then a large old carriage rolled by. In it sat a large old lady who saw the little girl and pitied her, and she said to the priest, "Give me the little girl, and I will take care of her."

Karen thought it was for the sake of the red shoes that the old lady had taken a fancy to her; but the old lady thought them frightful, and so they were burnt. And Karen was dressed very neatly, and was taught to read and to work; and people told her she was pretty. But the mirror said, "You are more than pretty; you are beautiful!"

One day the Queen with her little daughter passed through the town where Karen lived, and all the people, Karen amongst them, crowded in front of the palace, whilst the little Princess stood, dressed in white, at a window, for every one to see her. She wore neither train nor gold crown; but on her feet were pretty red morocco shoes—

much prettier indeed than those the shoemaker's wife had made for little Karen. Nothing in the world could be compared with these red shoes!

Karen was now old enough to be confirmed. She was to have a new frock and new shoes. The rich shoemaker in the town took the measure of her little foot. He took the measure in his own room where there was a large glass case full of neat shoes and shining boots. They looked very pretty, but the old lady, whose sight was not very good, did not notice them much. Amongst the shoes was a pair of red ones, just like those worn by the Princess. The shoemaker said they had been made for a Count's daughter but did not fit.

"They are of polished leather," said the old lady; "see how they shine!"

"Yes, they shine beautifully!" exclaimed Karen. And as the shoes fitted her, they were bought. But the old lady did not know that they were red, or she would never have suffered Karen to go to confirmation in them. But Karen did go. Everybody looked at her feet, and as she walked up the nave to the chancel it seemed to her that even the stone figures on the tombstones, and the portraits of the pastors and their wives with their stiff ruffs and long black robes, fixed their eyes on her red shoes. When she knelt before the altar she thought only of them; even when the clergyman laid his hand on her head, and when he spoke of her baptism, of her covenant with God, and of how she must remember that she was now a full-grown Christian. The organ sent forth its deep, solemn tones, the children's sweet voices mingled with those of the choristers, but Karen still thought only of her red shoes.

That afternoon, when the old lady was told that Karen had worn red shoes at her confirmation, she was vexed, and told Karen that for the future when she went to church, she must wear black shoes, were they ever so old.

On the next Sunday Karen was to make her first communion. She looked first at the red shoes, then at the black, then at the red again, and—put them on.

It was beautiful sunshiny weather, so Karen and the old

lady walked to church through the corn-fields, for the road was dusty.

At the church door stood an old soldier with a strange reddish-coloured beard. He was leaning on crutches, and he bowed almost to the earth, and asked the old lady if he might wipe the dust of her shoes. Karen put out her little foot also. "Oh, what pretty dancing-shoes!" said the old soldier; "mind you do not let them slip off when you dance"; and he passed his hands over them.

The old lady gave the soldier some money, and then went with Karen into church.

Again every one looked at Karen's red shoes; and all the carved figures bent their gaze upon them. And when Karen knelt before the altar, the red shoes still floated before her eyes. She thought of them and of them only, and she forgot to join in the hymn of praise—she forgot to repeat the Lord's Prayer.

At last all the people came out of church, and the old lady got into her carriage. Karen was lifting her foot to follow, when the old soldier standing in the porch cried, "Only look, what pretty dancing-shoes!" And then Karen found she could not help dancing a few steps. And after she had begun, her feet kept moving of themselves as though the shoes had a power over them. She danced round the churchyard and could not stop. The coachman was obliged to run after her, take hold of her and lift her into the carriage; but even then the feet kept on dancing, so that the good old lady got many a hard kick. At last the shoes were taken off, and the feet had rest.

Then the shoes were put away in a press, but Karen could not help going to look at them every now and then.

After a while the old lady lay ill in bed, and the doctor said she would never get better. She needed careful nursing, and who should have been her nurse and constant attendant but Karen? But there was to be a grand ball in the town, and Karen was invited. She thought of the dying old lady, she looked at the red shoes, and then she thought there could be no harm in putting them on. Then she went to the ball and began to dance. But when she

wanted to move to the right, the shoes bore her to the left; and when she would dance up the room, the shoes danced down the room, danced down the stairs, through the streets, and through the gates of the town. She danced on in spite of herself, till she danced into the dark wood.

Something shone through the trees. She thought at first it must be the moon shining through the mist. Then she saw a face; it was the old soldier with the red beard. He sat there nodding at her, and repeating, "See what pretty dancing-shoes they are!"

She was frightened, and tried to pull off her red shoes, but they stuck fast to her feet. She tore off her stockings; but the shoes seemed to have grown on to her feet. She felt compelled to go on dancing over field and meadow, in rain and in sunshine, by night and by day. It was most terrible at night. She danced across the open churchyard. The dead do not dance, they have something better to do. She would fain have sat down on the poor man's grave, where the bitter ferns grew, but for her there was neither rest nor quiet. She danced past the open church door, and there she saw an angel, clad in long white robes, and with wings that reached from his shoulders to the ground. His face was grave and stern, and in his hand he held a bright, glittering sword.

"Dance on," said he; "dance on, in thy red shoes, till thou art pale and cold, and thy skin shrinks and shrivels up like a skeleton's. Thou shalt dance still, from door to door, and wherever proud, vain children live thou shalt knock, so that they may hear thee and be afraid. Dance shalt thou, dance on——"

"Mercy!" cried Karen. But she heard not the angel's answer, for the shoes carried her through the gate, into the fields, along highways and byways; and still she had to dance on.

One morning she danced past a door she knew well. She heard psalm-singing within, and saw a coffin, strewn with flowers borne out. Then Karen knew that the good old lady was dead, and she felt herself a thing forsaken by men, and condemned by the Angel of God.

Still, on she felt forced to dance, even into the dark night. The shoes bore her through thorns and briars, till her limbs were torn and bleeding. Then she danced across the heath to a little lonely house where she knew the headsman lived; and she tapped with her fingers against the panes, crying:

"Come out! come out! I cannot come in for I must dance."

And the headsman said, "Surely you do not know who I am! I cut off the heads of wicked men; and I notice that my axe is quivering."

"Do not cut off my head," said Karen, "for then I could not live to repent of my sin; but cut off my feet with the red shoes."

Then she confessed all her sins, and the headsman cut off her feet with the red shoes on them; and the shoes with those little feet in them danced away over the fields, and into the deep forests.

Then the headsman made her a pair of wooden feet, and cut down some branches to serve as crutches, and he taught her the psalm which the penitents sing. And she kissed the hand that held the axe, and limped away over the heath. "Now I have certainly suffered quite enough through the red shoes," thought Karen, "I will go to church and let people see me once more." And she went as fast as she could to the church porch; but as she drew near it, the red shoes danced before her, and she was frightened and turned her back.

All that week she was sorrowful and shed many bitter tears. Then when Sunday came, she said to herself, "Now I have suffered and striven enough; I dare say I am quite as good as many of those who are holding their heads so high in church." So she took heart and went; but she did not get farther than the churchyard gate, for there again she saw the red shoes dancing before her, and in great terror she turned back, and repented more deeply than ever of her sinful pride.

Then she went to the pastor's house, and begged that some work might be given her, promising to work

hard and do all she could even without wages. She only wanted a roof to shelter her, she said, and to dwell with good people. And the pastor's wife had pity on her, and took her into her service. And Karen was grateful and industrious.

Every evening she sat silently listening to the pastor while he read the Bible aloud. All the children loved her, but when she heard them talk about dress and finery, and about being as beautiful as a queen, she would sorrowfully shake her head.

Next Sunday all the pastor's household went to church; and they asked her to go too; but she sighed, and looked with tears in her eyes upon her crutches.

When they were all gone, she went into her own little room, which was just large enough to hold a bed and a chair, and there she sat with her psalm-book in her hand, and, as she read in a humble and devout spirit, the wind wafted to her the sound of the organ from the church, and she lifted up her tearful face and prayed, "O God, help me!"

Then the sun shone brightly, and before her stood the white-robed Angel of God, the same whom she had seen on that night of horror at the church porch. But he no longer held in his hand a threatening sword; he carried instead a lovely green branch covered with roses. With this he touched the ceiling, which at once rose to a great height, and a bright gold star glittered on the spot the green branch had touched. He touched the walls too, and they opened wide, and Karen saw the organ, the old monuments, and the congregation all sitting in their richly carved seats and singing from their psalm-books.

For the church had come home to the poor girl in her narrow room, or rather the room had grown a church to her. She sat with the rest of the pastor's servants, and, when the psalm was ended, they looked up and nodded to her, saying, "You did well to come, Karen!"

"It was through mercy I came," said she.

And then the organ pealed forth again, and with it the children's voices in the choir rose clear and sweet. The

sunbeams streamed through the windows and fell bright and warm on Karen's seat. Her heart was so full of sunshine, of peace and gladness, that it broke ; and her soul flew upon a sunbeam to her Father in heaven, where not a look of reproach awaited her, not a word was breathed of the red shoes.

THE CONSTANT TIN SOLDIER

THERE were once five and twenty tin soldiers, all brothers, for all had been made out of one old tin spoon. They carried muskets in their arms, and held themselves very upright, and their uniforms were red and blue. The first words they heard in this world were, "Tin soldiers!" It was a little boy who uttered them, when the lid was taken off the box where they lay; and he clapped his hands with delight. They had been given to him because it was his birthday. Then he set them out on the table.

The soldiers were like each other to a hair; all but one, who had only one leg, because he had been made last, when there was not quite enough tin left. He stood as firmly, however, upon his one leg as the others did upon their two; and it is this one-legged tin soldier's fortunes that seem to us worthy of being told.

On the table where the tin soldiers stood there were other playthings, but the most charming of them all was a pretty pasteboard castle. Through its little windows one could look into the rooms. In front of the castle stood some tiny trees, clustering round a little mirror intended to represent a lake. Some waxen swans swam on the lake and were reflected in it.

All this was very pretty, but prettiest of all was a little lady standing in the open doorway of the castle. She, too, was cut out of pasteboard, but she had on a frock of the softest muslin, and a narrow sky-blue riband was flung across her shoulders like a scarf, and in the middle of this scarf was set a glittering tinsel rose. The little lady was a dancer, and she stretched out both her arms, and raised one of her legs so high in the air that the tin soldier could not see it, and thought she had, like himself, only one leg.

"That would be just the wife for me," thought he, "but

then she is of too high a rank. She lives in a castle, and I have only a box; and even that is not my own, for all our five and twenty men live in it; so it is no place for her. Still, I must make her acquaintance." Then he laid himself down at full length behind a snuff-box that stood on the table so that he had a full view of the delicate little lady still standing on one leg without losing her balance.

When evening came, all the other tin soldiers were put into the box, and the people of the house went to bed. Then the playthings began to have their own games; to pay visits, to fight battles, and to give balls. The tin soldiers rattled in the box, for they wished to play too, but the lid would not open. The nut-crackers cut capers, and the slate-pencil danced about on the table. There was such a noise that the canary woke up and began to talk too; but he always talked in verse. The only two who did not move from their places were the tin soldier and the dancer. She remained standing on the very tip of her toe, with outstretched arms; and he stood just as firmly on his one leg, never for a moment taking his eyes off her.

Twelve o'clock struck, and with a crash the lid of the snuff-box sprang open—there was no snuff in it, it was only a toy puzzle—and out jumped a little black conjurer. "Tin soldier!" said the conjurer, "please keep your eyes to yourself!"

But the tin soldier pretended not to hear.

"Well, just wait till to-morrow!" said the conjurer.

When the children got up next morning the tin soldier was placed on the window-ledge, and, whether the conjurer or the wind caused it, all at once the window flew open, and out fell the tin soldier, head foremost, from the third story to the ground. It was a dreadful fall, for he fell head first into the street, and at last rested with his cap and bayonet stuck between two paving-stones, and with his one leg in the air.

The servant-maid and the little boy came downstairs directly to look for him; but though they very nearly trod on him they could not see him. If the tin soldier had but called out, "Here I am!" they might easily have found him;

but he thought it would not be becoming for him to cry out, as he was in uniform.

Presently it began to rain; soon the drops were falling thicker, and there was a perfect downpour. When it was over, two little street arabs came by.

"Look," said one, "there is a tin soldier. Let him have a sail for once in his life."

So they made a boat out of newspaper, and put the tin soldier into it. Away he sailed down the gutter, both the boys running along by the side of it and clapping their hands. The paper boat rocked to and fro, and every now and then was whirled round so quickly that the tin soldier became quite giddy. Still he did not move a muscle but looked straight before him, and held his musket tightly clasped.

All at once the boat was carried into a long drain, where the tin soldier found it as dark as in his own box.

"Where can I be going now?" thought he. "It is all that conjurer's doing. Ah! if only the little maiden were sailing with me I would not mind its being twice as dark."

Just then a great water-rat that lived in the drain darted out. "Have you a passport?" asked the rat. "Show me your passport!" But the tin soldier was silent, and held his musket tighter than ever. The boat sailed on, and the rat followed. How he gnashed his teeth, and cried out to the sticks and the straws: "Stop him, stop him, he has not paid the toll; he has not even shown his passport." But the stream grew stronger and stronger. The tin soldier could already catch a glimpse of the daylight where the tunnel ended, but at the same time he heard a roaring noise that might have made the boldest tremble. Where the tunnel ended, the water of the gutter fell into a great canal. This was as dangerous for the tin soldier as a waterfall would be for us.

The fall was now so close that he could no longer stand upright. The boat darted forwards; the poor tin soldier held himself as stiffly as possible; so that no one could accuse him of having even blinked. The boat span round three or four times, and was filled with water to the brim; it must sink now.

The tin soldier stood up to his neck in water ; but deeper and deeper sank the boat, and softer and softer grew the paper till the water stood over the soldier's head. He thought of the pretty little dancer whom he should never see again, and these words rang in his ears :—

Fare on, thou soldier brave !
Life must end in the grave.

The paper now split in two, and the tin soldier fell through the rent and was at once swallowed up by a large fish. Oh, how dark it was ! darker even than in the tunnel and much narrower too ! But the tin soldier was as constant as ever ; and lay there at full length, still shouldering his arms.

The fish swam to and fro, and made the strangest movements, but at last he became quite still. After a while a flash of lightning seemed to dart through him and the daylight shone brightly, and some one cried out, "I declare, here is the tin soldier !" The fish had been caught, taken to the market, sold, and brought into the kitchen, where the servant-girl was cutting him up with a large knife. She seized the tin soldier by the middle with two of her fingers, and took him into the parlour, where every one was eager to see the wonderful man who had travelled in the maw of a fish. But the tin soldier was not proud.

They set him on the table, and—what strange things do happen in the world !—the tin soldier was in the very room in which he had been before. He saw the same children, the same playthings on the table—among them the beautiful castle with the pretty little dancing maiden, who was still standing upon one leg, while she held the other high in the air ; she too was constant. It quite touched the tin soldier ; he could have found it in his heart to weep tin tears, but such weakness would have been unbecoming in a soldier. He looked at her and she looked at him, but neither spoke a word.

And now one of the boys took the soldier and threw him into the stove. He gave no reason for doing so ; but no doubt it was the fault of the conjurer in the snuff-box.

The tin soldier now stood in a blaze of light. He felt extremely hot, but whether from the fire or from the flames of love he did not know. He had entirely lost his colour. Whether this was the result of his travels, or the effect of strong feeling, I know not. He looked at the little lady, and she looked at him, and he felt that he was melting; but, constant as ever, he still stood shouldering his arms. A door opened, and the draught caught the dancer; and, like a sylph, she flew straightway into the stove, to the tin soldier. Instantly she was in a blaze and was gone. The soldier was melted and dripped down among the ashes, and when the maid cleaned out the fireplace the next day she found his remains in the shape of a little tin heart. Of the dancer all that was left was the tinsel rose, and that was burnt as black as coal.

THE ANGEL

"WHENEVER a good child dies, an Angel comes down to earth, takes the dead child in his arms, and, spreading out his large white wings, flies with him over all the places that were dear to him in his lifetime. And the Angel gathers a handful of flowers, and takes them to God, that they may bloom even more beautifully in Heaven than they did upon earth. And the flower which pleases Him most receives a voice and is able to join in the song of the chorus of bliss."

Thus spoke an Angel of God while carrying a dead child to Heaven, and the child listened as if in a dream. Then they flew over all those places where the child had formerly played, and they passed through gardens full of lovely flowers.

"Which flower shall we take with us and plant in Heaven?" asked the Angel.

Near by stood a fair slender rose-bush, but some wicked hand had broken the stem, so that the half-opened buds hung faded and withered on the branches that it trailed on the ground. "Poor rose-tree!" said the child, "let us take it, that it may bloom again in Heaven."

And the Angel took it, and he kissed the child, and the little one half-opened his eyes. The Angel gathered many fine garden flowers, but he took also the meek little daisy and the wild heart's-ease.

"Now we have flowers enough!" said the child, but the Angel only nodded, and did not yet fly up to Heaven.

It was night and very still in the great town. They stayed there, and hovered over one of the narrowest streets where straw, ashes, and rubbish of all kinds lay scattered. There had been a removal that day, and on the ground were

broken plates, bits of plaster, rags, fragments of old hats, and other things not pleasant to see.

Amidst this confusion the Angel pointed to the pieces of an old flower-pot, and to a lump of earth that had fallen out of it. The earth was only held together by the roots of a large withered field-flower, which had been thrown out into the street among the refuse.

"We will take this flower with us also," said the Angel. "I will tell you why as we are flying along."

And they flew away, and the Angel spoke as follows :

"There once lived in a cellar, down in that narrow street, a poor, sick boy. He had been bed-ridden from his childhood. Now and then, perhaps, he was able to take a few turns up and down his little room on his crutches, but that was all. Sometimes, during the summer, the sunbeams would stream through his little cellar window; and then, the child would sit up, and when he felt the warm sun shining upon him, and could see the crimson blood in his thin wasted fingers as he held them up to the light, he would say, "To-day I have been out!" He only knew of the bright green woods of spring from a neighbour's son bringing him the first fresh boughs of the beech-tree. These he would hold over his head, and then fancy he was under the shade of the beech-trees, with the birds warbling and the sun shining around him.

"One spring day the neighbour's son brought him some field-flowers, and among them was one with a root, so it was put into a flower-pot and placed at the window, close by the bed. And, being carefully planted, it grew, and put forth fresh shoots, and bore flowers every year. To the sick boy it was like a beautiful garden, his little treasure upon earth. He watered it and guarded it, and took care that every sunbeam that entered the little low window should fall upon the plant. And its flowers, with their soft colours and sweet smell, mingled with his dreams, and towards them he turned when he was dying. The child has now been a year with the blessed; and for a year the plant has stood by the window, faded and forgotten, and to-day it was thrown out among the rubbish into the street. And this is

the flower which we have just now taken ; for this poor, faded field-flower has given more pleasure than the most splendid blossoms in the garden of a queen."

"But how do you know all this ?" asked the child, whom the Angel was carrying to Heaven.

"I know it," said the Angel, "because I myself was that little sick boy who went upon crutches. Ought I not to know my own flower ?"

Then the child opened its eyes, and looked into the Angel's bright and happy face ; and in the same moment they were in Heaven.

And God gave the dead child wings like the Angel's, so that he could fly hand in hand with that one ; and a voice was given to the poor, faded field-flower, and it sang with the angels round the great white throne, some very near, and others forming larger circles, farther and farther away, but all equally blessed.

And they all sang together—the angels, the good child, and the poor faded field-flower, which had lain among the rubbish of that dark and narrow street.

THE SHEPHERDESS AND THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP

HAVE you ever seen an old-fashioned oak cabinet, black with age and covered every inch of it with carved foliage and curious figures? Just such a cabinet, an heirloom once the property of its present mistress's great-grandmother, stood in a parlour. It was covered from top to bottom with carved roses and tulips, and little stags' heads with long branching antlers peered forth from the curious scrolls and foliage surrounding them. In the middle of the cabinet was carved the full-length figure of a man, who seemed to be perpetually grinning, perhaps at himself, for in truth he was a most ridiculous figure. He had crooked legs like a goat, small horns on his forehead, and a long beard. The children of the house used to call him "Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant Billy-goat's legs." This was a long, hard name, and not many figures, in wood or stone, could boast of such a title. There he stood, his eyes always fixed upon the table under the mirror; for on this table stood a pretty little porcelain shepherdess, her mantle gathered gracefully round her and fastened with a red rose. Her shoes and hat were gilt, her hand held a crook; she was a most charming figure. Close by her stood a little chimney-sweep as black as coal, and made like the shepherdess of porcelain. He was as clean and neat as any other china figure. Indeed, the manufacturer might just as well have made a prince of him as a chimney-sweep, for though elsewhere black as a coal, his face was as fresh and rosy as a girl's, which was certainly a mistake—it ought to have been black. With his ladder in his hand, he kept his place close by the little shepherdess. They had been put side by side from the first, had always remained on the same spot, and so had plighted

their troth to each other. They suited each other well for they were both young, both of the same kind of china, and both alike fragile and delicate.

Near them stood another figure three times as large as they were, and also made of porcelain. He was an old Chinese mandarin who could nod his head, and he declared that he was grandfather of the little shepherdess. He could not prove this, but he insisted that he had authority over her; and so, when "Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant Billy-goat's legs" made proposals to the little shepherdess, he nodded his head in token of his consent.

"Now you will have a husband," said the old mandarin to her, "who, I verily believe, is made of mahogany. You will be the wife of a Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant, of a man who has a whole cabinet full of silver plate, besides a store of no one knows what in the secret drawers."

"I will not go into that dismal cabinet," said the little shepherdess. "I have heard that he has eleven china wives already imprisoned there."

"Then you shall be the twelfth, and you will be in good company," said the Chinaman. "This very night, as soon as you hear a noise in the old cabinet you shall be married, as sure as I am a mandarin"; and then he nodded his head and fell asleep.

But the little shepherdess wept, and turned to her betrothed, the china chimney-sweep.

"I believe I must beg you," said she, "to go out with me into the wide world, for we cannot stay here."

"I will do everything you wish," said the little chimney-sweep; "let us go at once. I think I can support you by my profession."

"If we could but get safely off the table!" sighed she. "I shall never be happy till we are really out in the world."

Then he comforted her, and showed her how to set her little foot on the carved edges and gilded foliage twining round the leg of the table. He helped her with his little ladder, and at last they reached the floor. But when they turned to look at the old cabinet, they saw that it was all

astir: the carved stags were putting their little heads farther out, raising their antlers and moving their throats, whilst "Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant Billy-goat's legs" was jumping up and down and shouting to the old Chinese mandarin, "Look, they are running away! they are running away!" The runaways were dreadfully frightened, and jumped into an open drawer under the window-sill.

In this drawer there were three or four packs of cards, none of them complete, and also a little puppet-theatre which had been set up, as neatly as it could be. A play was then going on, and all the queens, whether of diamonds, hearts, clubs, or spades, sat in the front row fanning themselves with the flowers they held in their hands, while behind them stood the knaves, showing that they had each two heads, one above and one below, as most cards have. The play was about two persons who were crossed in love, and the shepherdess wept over it, for it was just like her own story.

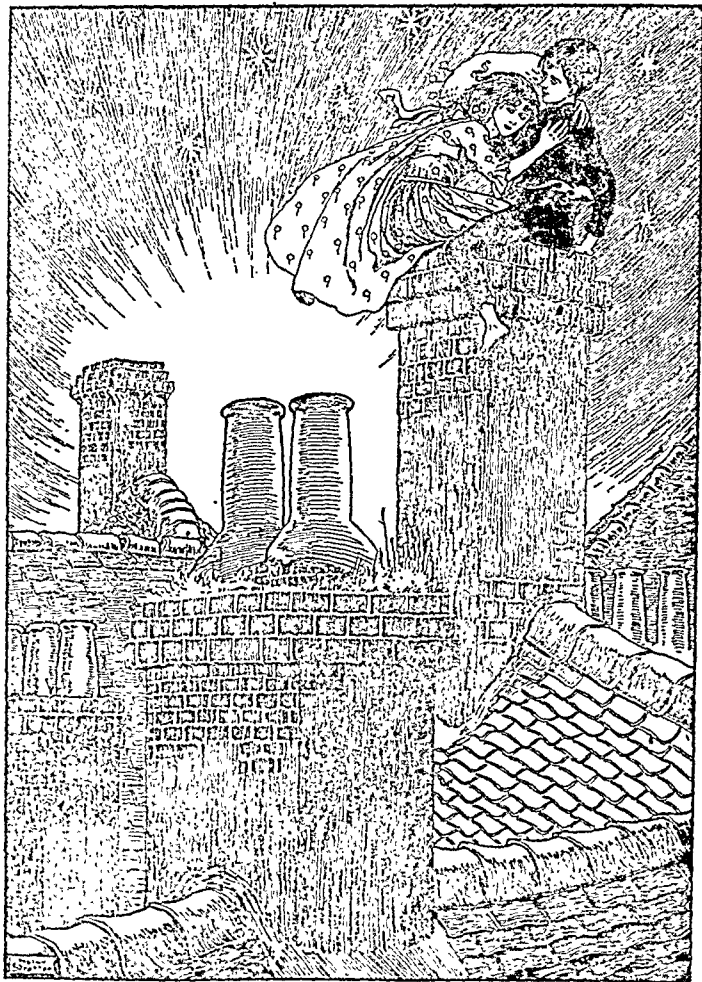
"I cannot bear this!" said she. "Let us leave the drawer." But when they again got to the floor, on looking up at the table, they saw that the old Chinese mandarin was awake, and that his whole body was shaking to and fro with rage.

"Oh, the old mandarin is coming!" cried the little shepherdess, and down she fell on one knee in the greatest distress.

"A thought has struck me," said the chimney-sweep. "Let us creep into the large pot-pourri vase that stands in the corner; there we can rest upon roses and lavender, and throw salt in his eyes if he come near us."

"That will not do at all," said she; "for many years ago the mandarin was betrothed to the pot-pourri vase, and there is always a kindly feeling between people who have been so intimate as that. No, there is no help for it; we must wander forth together into the wide world!"

"Have you indeed the courage to go with me into the wide world?" asked the chimney-sweep. "Have you thought how large it is, and that we may never return?"



"THERE THEY SAT DOWN TO REST"

"I have," replied she.

The chimney-sweep looked fixedly at her, and when he saw that she was firm, he said, "My path leads through the chimney. Have you indeed the courage to creep with me through the stove, through the fire-box and up the pipe? I know the way well! We shall climb up so high that they cannot come near us, and at the top there is a hole that leads into the wide world."

He led her to the door of the stove.

"How black it looks!" sighed she, but she went on with him, through the fire-box and up the pipe, where it was dark, pitch dark.

"Now we are in the chimney," said he; "and look, what a lovely star shines over us."

And it really was a star, shining right down upon them, as if to show them the way. So they climbed and crawled; it was a fearful path, so dreadfully steep and seemingly endless, but the little sweep lifted her and held her, and showed her the best places to plant her tiny porcelain feet on, till at last they reached the edge of the chimney. There they sat down to rest for they were very tired.

The sky with all its stars was above them, and the town with all its roofs lay beneath them. They could see all round them far out into the wide world. The poor little shepherdess had never dreamt of anything like this; she leant her little head on the chimney-sweep's arm, and wept so bitterly that the gilding broke off from her waistband.

"This is too much!" she cried. "The world is all too large! Oh that I were once more upon the little table under the mirror! I shall never be happy till I am there again. I have followed you into the wide world; surely if you love me you can follow me home again."

The chimney-sweep talked sensibly to her, reminding her of the old mandarin and "Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant Billy-goat's legs." But she wept so bitterly, and kissed her little chimney-sweep so fondly, that at last he could not but yield to her request, foolish as it was.

So with great trouble they crawled down the chimney, crept through the pipe and through the fire-box and into

the dark stove. They lurked for a little behind the door, listening, before they would venture to return into the room. Everything was quite still. They peeped out. Alas! on the floor lay the old mandarin. In trying to follow the runaways, he had jumped down from the table and had broken into three pieces. His head lay shaking in a corner. "The Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant Billy-goat's legs" stood where he had always stood, thinking over what had happened.

"Oh, how shocking!" exclaimed the little shepherdess. "My old grandfather is broken in pieces, and it is all our fault! I shall never get over it!" and she wrung her little hands.

"He can be put together again," said the chimney-sweep. "He can very easily be put together; only don't be so impatient! If they glue his back together, and put a strong rivet in his neck, then he will be as good as new, and will be able to say plenty of unpleasant things to us."

"Do you really think so?" asked she. And then they climbed up the table to the place where they had stood before.

"Well, we're not much farther on," said the chimney-sweep; "we might have spared ourselves all the trouble."

"If we could but have old grandfather put together!" said the shepherdess. "Will it cost very much?"

He was put together. The family had his back glued and his neck riveted. He was as good as new, but could no longer nod his head.

"We have certainly grown very proud since we were broken in pieces," said Field-Marshal-Major-General-Corporal-Sergeant Billy-goat's legs, "but I must say, for my part, I do not see that there is anything to be proud of. Am I to have her or am I not? Just answer me that!"

The chimney-sweep and the little shepherdess looked imploringly at the old mandarin; they were so afraid lest he should nod. But nod he could not, and it was disagreeable to him to have to tell a stranger that he had a rivet in his neck. So the young porcelain people were left together, and they blessed the grandfather's rivet, and loved each other till they broke in pieces.

BIG CLAUS AND LITTLE CLAUS

ONCE upon a time there lived in the same village two men bearing the same name. One of them had four horses, the other had only one; so to distinguish them from each other, the owner of four horses was called "Big Claus," and he who owned only one horse was known as "Little Claus."

All the week long Little Claus had to plough for Big Claus, and to lend him his one horse, and in return Big Claus lent him his four horses, but only for one day in the week, Sunday. Then Little Claus was a proud man, and smacked his whip over the five horses, all his for this one day at least. The people, dressed in their best, were walking to church, and as they passed they looked at Little Claus, ploughing with his five horses; and he was so pleased that he kept cracking his whip and crying out, "Hurrah! five fine horses, and all mine!"

"You must not say that," said Big Claus; "for only one of the horses is yours."

But Little Claus soon forgot, and when another party passed by, cried out again, "Hurrah! five fine horses, all mine!"

"Did not I tell you not to say that?" cried Big Claus very angrily. "If you say that again, I shall strike your one horse dead on the spot, and then there'll be an end to your boasting."

"Oh, but I'll never say it again, indeed I won't," said Little Claus, and he quite meant to keep his word. But presently more people came by, and when they nodded a friendly "Good-morning" to him, he was so delighted, and it seemed to him such a grand thing to have five horses to plough his bit field, that he flourished his whip and cried out, "Hurrah! five fine horses, every one of them mine!"

"I'll soon cure you of that!" cried Big Claus in a fury, and taking up a stone he flung it at the head of Little Claus's horse. So heavy was the stone that the poor creature fell down dead.

"Oh, now I have no horse at all!" cried Little Claus, weeping. But after a little he set to work to flay the dead horse, and he dried the skin thoroughly in the air. Then, putting the dried skin into a sack, he slung it across his shoulders, and set out to the nearest town to sell it. He had a long way to go, and had to pass through a large dark wood. Here a fierce storm burst forth, and the clouds, the rain, and the dark shaking firs, so bewildered poor Claus that he lost his way, and before he could find it night came down. Not far off stood a large farm-house. The shutters were closed, but Little Claus could see lights shining through the cracks at the top of the shutters. He went up to the house, and knocked at the door. The farmer's wife opened the door, but when she heard what he wanted she told him he must ask elsewhere. He couldn't come into her house; her husband was from home, and she couldn't let in a stranger in his absence.

"Well then, I must sleep outside," said Little Claus, as the farmer's wife shut the door in his face.

Near the farm-house stood a hay-stack, and between it and the house was a little shed with a flat straw roof.

"I can sleep up there," thought Little Claus when he saw the roof. "It will make a capital bed, but I hope the stork may not take it into his head to fly down and bite my legs." For a stork had made his nest on the roof, and had mounted guard beside the nest, as wide-awake as could be, although it was night.

So Little Claus crept up on the roof of the shed, and there he turned and twisted about till he had made himself comfortable. The shutters he found did not close properly at the top, so that he could see all that went on in the room below. There he saw a large table spread with bread and wine, roast meat and fried fish. The farmer's wife and the sexton were sitting at table. She was pouring out a glass of wine for him, and he was eagerly helping himself to a

large slice of fish—he happened to be particularly fond of fish. “It’s really too bad of them to keep it all to themselves!” sighed Little Claus. “Oh, how I should like some!” and he crept as near to the window as he could. What a fine cake he could see now! Why, this was quite a feast!

Just then he heard the tramp of hoofs coming down the road to the farm-house. It was the farmer riding home.

The farmer was a real good-hearted fellow, but he had one strange weakness, he could not bear to see a sexton; the sight of one made him half mad. Now, the sexton of the neighbouring town was first cousin to the farmer’s wife, and they were old playmates and good friends; so, knowing that the farmer would be from home this evening, he came to pay his cousin a visit; and the good woman, being pleased to see him, had put before him the best she had in her larder. Now, when she heard the tramp of the farmer’s horse, she was frightened and bade the sexton creep into a large empty chest that stood in a corner. He did so, for he knew that the farmer would be almost wild if he came in and found a sexton in the room. The woman then hastened to hide the wine, and put the dishes inside her baking-oven, for fear her husband, if he saw the table spread with them, should ask for whom she had been preparing such a grand feast.

“Oh dear, oh dear!” sighed Little Claus on the top of the shed, when he saw the good things put out of sight.

“Anybody up there?” asked the farmer, on hearing the noise; and he looked up and saw Little Claus. “Why are you lying up there? Come down and come into the house with me.”

So Little Claus came down and told the farmer how he had lost his way, and begged him for lodgings for the night.

“To be sure,” said the good-natured man. “Come in quickly, and let’s have something to eat.”

The woman received them kindly, covered one end of the long table with a cloth and placed on it a large basin of porridge. The farmer was hungry and ate his porridge with a capital appetite, but Little Claus could not eat for thinking of the roast meat, the fish, the wine, and the nice cake that he

had seen stowed away in the oven. He had put the sack containing the horse's skin under the table, and now, as he did not relish the porridge, he trod on the sack till the dry skin squeaked quite loud.

"Hush!" muttered Little Claus to his sack, at the same time treading on it again, so as to make it squeak even louder than before.

"What have you got in your sack?" asked the farmer.

"Oh! I've got a little conjurer there," replied Little Claus, "and he says we need not be eating porridge when he has conjured a feast of beef-steak, fried fish, and cake, into the oven on purpose for us."

"A conjurer did you say?" cried the farmer, and starting up he looked into the oven, and there, to be sure, were fish, and steak, and cake. They had been hidden there by the farmer's wife, and he thought it was the work of the conjurer under the table. The farmer's wife durst not say a word. Almost as bewildered as her husband, she set the food on the table, and the farmer and his guest began with a hearty appetite to eat of the good cheer.

Presently Little Claus trod on his sack again, and again the skin squeaked.

"What does your conjurer say now?" asked the farmer.

"He says," replied Little Claus, "that there are three bottles of wine for us standing just in the corner of the oven." So the woman was obliged to bring out the wine that she had hidden, and the farmer poured himself out a glass and enjoyed it. He thought it would be a fine thing to have such a capital conjurer as this.

"A proper conjurer this of yours!" said he at last. "Do you think he could conjure up the Evil One? I should rather like to see him."

"Of course," answered Little Claus; "my conjurer will do anything I ask him.—That you will, won't you?" said he, again treading on his sack.—"Didn't you hear him say 'Yes'?" he asked. "But I warn you he, the 'Evil One,' is somewhat dark and unpleasant-looking, and you'll not like to see him!"

"Oh, I shall not be afraid. What will he look like?"



'THE FARMER RAISED THE LID A LITTLE AND PEEPED IN'

"Why, he is for all the world just like a sexton."

"A sexton!" said the farmer. "That is a pity! You know I cannot bear the sight of a sexton; but no matter, since I shall know that it is not a real sexton, I shall not care about it. Oh, I've plenty of courage, only don't let him come too near me!"

"Well, I'll ask my conjurer again," said Little Claus, and he trod on his skin till it went "squeak, squeak," and he bent down to listen:

"What does he say now?" asked the farmer.

"He says you must open the large chest that stands in the corner yonder. You have only to lift up the lid, and you will see the Evil One crouching down inside; but you must hold the lid firmly so that he cannot slip out."

"Will you help me to hold the lid?" said the farmer; and he went to the chest where his wife had hidden the real sexton, who sat huddled up, trembling, and holding his breath, lest he should be discovered.

The farmer raised the lid a little and peeped in. "Ugh!" cried he, springing back in affright, "I saw him; he is exactly like our sexton; oh, how horrible!"

Then he sat down at table again, and began to drink. The wine revived his courage; and neither he nor his guest ever thought of going to bed. There they sat, talking and feasting, till late in the night.

"Do you know," said the farmer at length, "I should like very much to have your conjurer; would you mind selling him to me? Name your own price; I don't care if I give you a whole bushel of money for it on the spot."

"How can you ask such a thing?" said Little Claus. "He is such a useful and faithful servant. I would not dream of parting with him for his weight in gold ten times over."

"I can't offer you so much gold," said the farmer, "but all the same I should like very much to have him."

"Really," said Little Claus at length, "since you have been so kind as to give me lodgings for the night, I do not think I can refuse your request. I will let you have my conjurer for a bushel of money—only the bushel must be crammed full, you know."

"Certainly it shall," answered the farmer; "but you must take away the chest as well. I don't wish it to remain an hour longer in the house; it will always be reminding me of the hateful sexton-face I saw inside it."

So the bargain was struck, and Little Claus gave the farmer his sack, with the dry skin in it, and got for it a bushel of money. The farmer also gave him a wheelbarrow to carry away the money and the chest.

"Farewell!" said Little Claus, as he wheeled away in the wheelbarrow the money and the chest with the sexton hidden in it.

On one side of the wood flowed a broad, deep river. The stream was so strong that no one could swim against it, so a bridge had lately been built over it. Little Claus took his way over the bridge, but stopped in the middle of it, saying loud enough to be heard by the sexton in the chest, "Now, what on earth is the use of this great chest to me? It's as heavy as if it were filled with stones; and quite tires me out wheeling it along. I'll throw it out into the river: if it swims home after me, well and good; if not, it doesn't matter to me."

Then he took hold of the chest and lifted it, as if intending to throw it into the water.

"Don't do that, I beg of you," cried the sexton from the inside of the chest; "please let me out first."

"Holloa!" cried Little Claus, pretending to be frightened; "is the chest bewitched? If so, the sooner it's out of my hands the better."

"Oh no, no, no," cried the sexton; "let me out, and I'll give you another whole bushel of money."

"Ah, that's quite another matter," said Little Claus; and he set down the chest, and lifted the lid; and out crept the sexton, greatly pleased at his escape. He kicked the empty chest into the water, and then took Little Claus to his house with him, where he gave him the bushel of money he had promised. So Little Claus had now a wheelbarrow full of money.

"I have certainly been well paid for my horse's skin," said he to himself, as he entered his own little room, and

emptied his money in a heap on the floor. How vexed Big Claus will be when he finds how rich my horse's skin has made me. But I shall not tell him exactly how it all came about." Then he sent a little boy to Big Claus to borrow a bushel-measure from him.

"What can he want with a bushel-measure, I wonder?" thought Big Claus, and he cunningly smeared the bottom of the measure with clay, hoping that some of whatever was measured might stick to it. And so it happened. And when the measure was brought back to him, he found three silver coins sticking to the bottom. "Fine doings, upon my word!" cried Big Claus; and off he set to the house of his namesake, and demanded, "Where did you get so much money?"

"For my horse's skin, which I sold yesterday," was the answer.

"Are horses' skins so dear as that?" said Big Claus. "Who would have thought it?" And he ran home, took an axe, knocked all his four horses on the head with it, and then flayed off the skins, and took them into the town to sell. "Skins, skins, who will buy skins?" he cried as he went through the streets.

All the shoemakers and tanners in the town came running up to him, and asked what he wanted for them.

"A bushel of money for each," replied Big Claus.

"Are you mad?" said they. "Do you think we have money to spend by the bushel?"

"Skins, fresh skins, who will buy skins?" shouted he again; and still to all who asked how much he wanted for them he replied, "A bushel of money."

"The boor is trying to make fools of us," said some one at last in great wrath. Then the shoemakers took their straps and the tanners their leather aprons and they beat Big Claus.

"Skins, fresh skins, fine fresh skins," they mocked. "And let us mark his own skin till it is black and blue. Out of the town with the great ass!" So they thrust Big Claus out of the town.

"Little Claus shall pay for this," muttered he. "I'll beat him to death."

It so chanced that Little Claus's grandmother died that evening. She had always been cross and ill-natured to him, but he felt really sorry. So he lifted the dead woman and laid her in his own warm bed, in hopes that the warmth might bring her to life again. For his own part he thought he could spend the night in a chair in a corner of the room as he had often done before. About midnight the door opened, and Big Claus came in with an axe in his hand. He knew where Little Claus's bed stood, so he went straight up to it, and struck the dead grandmother a violent blow on the head, thinking it was Little Claus.

"There's for you," cried he. "Now you'll never make a fool of me again." And off he went home.

"What a wicked man he is," sighed Little Claus. "So he wished to kill me. It was a good thing that grandmother was dead already, or that blow would have hurt her very much."

Then he dressed his grandmother in her Sunday clothes, borrowed a horse from a neighbour, yoked it to the cart, set his grandmother on the back seat so that she might not fall out when it was moving, and so drove away through the wood. At sunrise they came to a large inn, and there Little Claus pulled up and went in to get something to eat. The landlord was a wealthy and a good man, but he was as quick-tempered as if he had been made of pepper and snuff.

"Good-morning!" said he to Little Claus. "You are early astir to-day."

"Yes!" said Little Claus. "I am going to the town with my grandmother; she is sitting at the back of the cart. But I cannot bring her into the room; will you, yourself, not take her a glass of mead? But you must speak very loud for she does not hear well."

"I'll do that," said the landlord, and he poured out a large glass of mead, and went out with it to the grandmother who was sitting bolt upright in the cart.

"Here is a glass of mead from your grandson," said the landlord. But the dead woman did not answer a word, but sat quite still.

"Don't you hear?" bawled the landlord as loudly as he

could. "Here is a glass of mead from your grandson." Again and yet, again he yelled the same thing, and as she did not stir he lost his temper and threw the glass of mead in her face. It struck her on the nose, and she fell backwards into the cart, for she was only seated upright behind and not fastened.

"What! what!" cried Little Claus, rushing from the inn and seizing the landlord by the throat. "You have killed my grandmother. See what a hole there is in her forehead."

"Oh, what a misfortune!" cried the landlord, wringing his hands. "All this comes of my hasty temper. Dear Little Claus, I will bury your grandmother as if she were my own, and I will give you a bushel of money, if you will only say nothing about this. If it is known they will cut off my head, and that will be very unpleasant."

So Little Claus got a bushel of money, and the landlord buried his grandmother as if she had been his own.

Then when Little Claus came home again with much money, he at once sent his boy again to Big Claus, asking him for the loan of a bushel-measure.

"What's this?" said Big Claus. "Did I not kill him outright? I must look into this myself." So he himself went across with the bushel-measure to Little Claus. "How did you come by all this money?" said he, his eyes almost starting out of his head, as he saw all the riches his neighbour had added.

"You murdered my grandmother instead of me," said Little Claus. "So I have sold her for a bushel of money."

"That's a good price, at any rate," said Big Claus. So he went home, took a hatchet and killed his own grandmother. Then he put her into a cart, drove to the town where an apothecary lived,¹ and asked if he would buy a dead body.

"Who is it? and where did you get it?" asked the apothecary.

"It is my grandmother," answered Big Claus. "I have killed her, that I might get a bushel of money for her body."

"God protect us!" said the apothecary. "You are raving. If you say such things, you will have your head cut off." And then he talked to him seriously about the wickedness of what he had done, and told him that such a crime should certainly not go unpunished. He frightened Big Claus so much that he rushed out of the Surgery, leapt into the cart, whipped up his horse, and drove home. The apothecary and all the people, thinking him mad, let him go where he would.

"You'll pay for this," said Big Claus as soon as he got into the main road. "Yes, you'll pay for this, Little Claus." So, as soon as he got home, he took the largest sack he could find and went across to Little Claus and said: "So, you have played me another trick. First I killed my horses, then my grandmother, and it is all your fault; but you shall no longer make a fool of me." Then he caught Little Claus and bundled him bodily into the sack, which he threw over his shoulders, saying, "Now I am going to drown you."

But he had a long way to walk before he reached the river, and Little Claus was no light weight to carry. The road led past the church. The organ was playing, for the service had just begun. Among the congregation Big Claus saw a man to whom he wished to speak. "Little Claus cannot get out of the sack by himself," thought he, "and no one can help him, for all the people are in church. I shall just go in and call that man back into the porch for a minute." So he set down the sack and ran into church.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" sighed Little Claus in the sack as he turned and twisted in vain efforts to loosen the string with which the sack was tied. Just then a very old drover passed by. His hair was white as snow, and he had a stout staff in his hand with which he was driving a large herd of cows and bullocks before him, many more, indeed, than he, weak as he was, could manage. One of them knocked against the sack, and turned it over and over. "Ah, yes!" cried Little Claus, "I am still so young; and I am soon going to heaven."

larger herd is grazing; I will give you that herd also.' Then I saw that the river was a sort of highway for the people of the sea, and that on it they walked and drove to and fro from the sea far up into the land where the river rises, and thence back to the sea again. No place can be more beautiful than the bottom of the river is. It is covered with the prettiest flowers and the sweetest, freshest grass. The fish swam past me as swiftly as the birds fly in the air; and what gaily-dressed people I saw there, and what fine cattle grazed on the hills and in the valleys!"

"Then why were you in such a hurry to come up again?" asked Big Claus; "if it was all so beautiful down there I don't think I'd have come back."

"Did not I tell you," said Little Claus, "that the sea-lady told me that a mile up the road—and by the road she could only mean the river, she can't come into our land roads—there was another and larger herd of cattle for me? But I knew that the river makes a great many turns, and I thought I'd save myself half-a-mile by taking the short cut across the land. So here I am, you see, and I shall soon get to my sea-cattle!"

"What a lucky fellow you are!" exclaimed Big Claus. "Don't you think that I might have some cattle too, if I went down to the bottom of the river?"

"How can I tell?" asked Little Claus.

"You envious scoundrel! You want to keep all the beautiful sea-cattle for yourself, I warrant!" cried Big Claus. "Either you will carry me to the water's edge, and throw me over, or I will kill you! Make your choice!"

"Oh, please don't be so angry!" entreated Little Claus. "I cannot carry you in the sack to the river, you are too heavy for me; but if you will walk there yourself, and then creep into the sack, I will throw you over with all the pleasure in the world!"

"But if I find no sea-cattle, I shall kill you all the same when I come back, remember that!" said Big Claus.

They walked together to the river. As soon as the cattle saw the water, they ran on as fast as they could, eagerly crowding against each other, and all wanting to drink first.

"Only look at my sea-cattle!" said Little Claus. "See how they are longing to be at the bottom of the river."

"That's all very well," said Big Claus, "but you must help me first." And he quickly crept into a great sack which had lain stretched across the shoulders of one of the oxen. "Put a heavy stone in with me," said he, "else, perhaps, I shall not sink to the bottom."

"No fear of that!" replied Little Claus. However, he put a large stone into the sack, tied the strings, and pushed the sack into the water. Plump! there it fell straight to the bottom.

"I am much afraid he will not find his sea-cattle!" observed Little Claus, and he drove his own herd home to the village.

THE LEAPING MATCH

THE flea, the grasshopper, and the frog once wished to try which of them could jump highest; so they invited the whole world, and anybody else who liked, to come and see the grand sight. They were all three first-rate jumpers, as every one saw when they met together in the room.

"I will give my daughter to him who shall jump highest," said the King. "It would be too bad for you to have to jump for nothing."

The flea came first. He had very polite manners, and bowed to the company on every side, for he was of noble blood; besides, he was accustomed to man, and that always makes a great difference.

Next came the grasshopper. He was certainly of a heavier build, but all the same he had a good figure and wore a green uniform, which belonged to him by right of birth. Besides, he was said to have sprung from a very high Egyptian family, and to be greatly thought of in that country. He had been taken out of the field where he learned to jump and put into a card house three stories high. This house was built on purpose for him, and all of court-cards, the faces being turned inwards. As for the doors and windows, they were all cut out of the Queen of Hearts.

"And I can sing so well," said he, "that sixteen parlour-bred crickets, who have chirped and chirped and chirped ever since they were born, and yet could never get anybody to build them a card house, after hearing me, have fretted themselves ten times thinner than they were before, from jealousy."

Both the flea and the grasshopper knew how to make the

most of themselves, and each thought himself quite a match for a Princess.

The frog said not a word; however, it might be that he thought the more. The house-dog, after sniffing about him carefully, stated that the frog must be of a good family. And the King's old and trusted councillor, who had received three medals for holding his tongue, declared that the frog must be gifted with the spirit of prophecy, and that one could tell from his back whether there was to be a severe or a mild winter, which was more than could be read from the back of the man who wrote the Almanac.

"I will say nothing for the present," said the old King, "but I will observe everything, and form my own opinion. Let them show us what they can do."

And now the match began.

The flea jumped so high that no one could see what had become of him, and so they insisted that he had not jumped at all, "which was disgraceful, after he had made such a fuss!"

The grasshopper only jumped half as high, but he jumped right into the King's face, and the King declared he was quite disgusted by his rudeness.

The frog stood still as if lost in thought; and people began to think he did not mean to jump at all.

"I'm afraid he is ill!" said the dog; and he went sniffing at him again to see if he could find out what was wrong, when, lo! all at once the frog made a little sidelong jump into the lap of the Princess, who was sitting on a low gold stool close by.

Then the King gave his judgment.

"There is nothing higher than my daughter," said he, "therefore it is plain that he who jumps up to her jumps highest; but only a person of good understanding would ever have thought of that, so the frog has shown us that he has understanding."

And thus the frog won the Princess.

"I jumped highest, for all that!" said the flea. "But it's all the same to me. Let her have the stiff-legged, slimy creature, if she like! I jumped highest; but dulness and heaviness win the day with people in this stupid world."

And so the flea went away and fought in foreign wars, where, it is said, he was killed.

As for the grasshopper, he sat on a green bank, and thought on the world and its strange goings on, and at length he repeated the flea's last words. "Yes," he said, "dulness and heaviness win the day! dulness and heaviness win the day!" And then he again began singing his own melancholy song, and it is from him that we have learnt this story, and yet, my friend, though you read it here in a printed book, it may not be perfectly true.

THE ELFIN HALL

SEVERAL large lizards were running in and out among the clefts of an old tree. "Only hear what a racket there is in the old Elfin-mount yonder!" said one lizard. "I have not been able to close my eyes for the last two nights; I might as well have had the toothache, for all the sleep I have had!"

"There's something going on, certainly!" said the second lizard. "They raise the Mount upon four red pillars till cock-crowing. There is a regular cleaning and dusting, and the Elf-maidens are learning new dances. There is certainly something in the wind!"

"Yes; I have been talking it over with an earth-worm of my acquaintance," said a third lizard. "He has just come from the Mount where he has been grubbing for days and nights together, and has overheard a good deal. He can't see at all, poor wretch! but no one can be quicker at feeling and hearing. They are expecting distinguished strangers at the Elfin-mount; but who they are, the earth-worm did not know. All the will-o'-the-wisps are engaged to form a torch-light procession as they call it; and all the silver and gold, of which there is such a store in the Elfin-mount, is being fresh rubbed up, and set out to shine in the moon-light."

Just then the Elfin-mount opened, and an old Elf-maid came tripping out. She was the Elf-King's housekeeper, and distantly related to his family, and so wore an amber heart on her forehead, though otherwise she was plainly dressed. Like all elves, she was hollow in the back.¹ She was very quick on her feet, "trip, trip." Gracious! how

¹ Elves are popularly supposed to be made hollow at the back because they are intended only to be looked at in front.

fast she ran, straight down to the sea to seek the night-raven.¹ "You are invited to Elfin-mountain, this evening," said she; "but will you not do me a great kindness, and be the bearer of the other invitations? You do not keep house yourself, you know; so you can easily oblige me. We are going to have some very good conjurers, in fact, and they have always lots to say; for the Elf-King wishes to make a great display."

"Who are to be invited?" asked the night-raven.

"All the world may come to the great ball; even men, if they talk in their sleep, or do anything in our way. But for the feast the company must be very select; none but guests of the very highest rank must be present. To say the truth, the King and I have been having a little dispute; for I thought that not even ghosts should be admitted. The Mer-King and his daughter must be invited first; they may not like coming on land, but I'll promise they shall each have a wet stone, or perhaps something better still, to sit on; and then, I think, they cannot refuse us this time. All old demons of the first class, with tails, we must have; also, the hobgoblins and the imps. And, I fancy, we cannot pass over the death-horse and the grave-pig² or even the church dwarf; true, they do not belong to our set, they are too solemn for us, but they are connected with the family, and pay us regular visits."

"Croak!" said the night-raven; and away he flew to bear the invitations.

The large state-room in the Mount had been thoroughly cleaned and cleared out; the floor had been washed with moonshine, and the walls rubbed with witches' fat till they shone as tulips do when held up to the light. In the kitchen, frogs were roasting on the spit; while other choice

¹ When a ghost had been laid by a priest a stake was driven into the place. At midnight the cry, "Let me out," was heard; and when the stake was withdrawn the ghost flew away in the shape of a raven with a hole through its left wing, a night-raven.

² In Denmark it is popularly supposed that a live horse and a live pig are buried under the foundations of every church. The ghosts of these animals are the death-horse and the grave-pig. The death-horse is supposed to hobble every night to a house in which some one is going to die.

dishes, such as mushroom seed, hemlock soup, etc., were ready or were being prepared. These were to supply the first courses. Rusty nails, bits of coloured glass, and such like dainties, were to come in for the dessert. There was also bright saltpetre wine, and ale brewed in the brewery of the Wise Witch of the Moor.

To make everything complete, the old Elfin-King's gold crown had been fresh rubbed with powdered slate-pencil.

"Dear papa," said the youngest of the daughters, "won't you tell me now who these grand visitors are to be?"

"Well," said His Majesty, "I suppose I may as well. Two of my daughters must get themselves ready to be married; for married they certainly shall be. The old goblin from Norway who lives in the Dovre mountains and who has so many castles of freestone among them, besides a gold-mine—a capital thing, let me tell you—is coming here with his two boys, who are each to choose a bride. Such an honest, straightforward old Norseman the father is, so merry and jovial! He and I are old comrades. He came down here years ago to fetch his wife. His sons, they say, are rather unmannerly cubs; but perhaps report may have done them injustice, and at any rate they are sure to grow better as they grow older."

"And when are they to be here?" inquired his youngest daughter again.

"That depends on wind and weather," said the Elfin-King. "They travel economically. They come when they can get a ship. I wanted them to pass over by Sweden, but the old man would not hear of that. He does not keep pace with the times. That's the only fault I have to find with him."

Just then two will-o'-the-wisps came dancing up, each trying to go faster than the other so as to get there first.

"They are coming! They are coming!" cried both.

"Give me my crown, and let me stand in the moonlight," said the Elf-King. And the daughters lifted their long scarfs and bowed to the earth.

There stood the old goblin, wearing a crown made of icicles and polished fir-cones. He wore, besides, a bearskin

cloak and great warm boots. His sons were clad more lightly, and had their throats bare, and wore trousers without braces, for they were strong young fellows.

"Do they call that a hill?" said the younger. "In Norway we would call it a hole."

"Have you no eyes, boys?" said the old goblin. "A hole goes in and a hill stands out." They wondered most that they could so easily understand the language.

"Behave yourselves now!" said the old man, "or people will think you have been very badly brought up."

And now they all entered the Elfin-mount, where a very select party was already assembled. Every possible arrangement had been made for the comfort of each guest. The Sea-King's family, for instance, sat at table in large tubs of water, and they said they felt quite at home. Every one behaved well except the two young northern goblins, who at last so far forgot themselves as to put their legs on the table.

"Take your feet off the table!" said their father; and they obeyed, but not at once. Then they pelted the ladies who waited at table with fir-cones, which they drew from their pockets; and, to be more at ease, they took off their boots, and gave them to the lady sitting between them to hold. But their father, the old goblin, behaved very differently. He talked delightfully about the grand Norse mountains, and the torrents, white with dancing spray. He told of the salmon leaping up from the wild waters while the water-spirit was playing on his golden harp; of starlight winter nights when the sleigh-bells tinkled merrily, and the youths ran with lighted torches over ice, so glassy and transparent that through it they could see the fishes whirling to and fro in deadly terror beneath their feet. He described everything so well that those who were listening could see it all; see the mills going round, and the gallant youths and pretty maidens singing songs, and dancing the old Norse dance.

Then the young Elf-maidens had to dance. First they danced simple dances, then stamping dances, and they did both remarkably well. Last came the most difficult dance

of all, the "Dance out of the dance," as it was called. Bravo! How long their legs seemed to grow! and how they whirled and spun about! You could hardly distinguish legs from arms, or arms from legs. Round and round they went. Such whirling and twirling, such whirling and whizzing there was that it made the death-horse feel quite dizzy; and at last he grew so unwell that he had to leave the table.

"Bravo!" cried the old goblin. "They know how to use their legs! But can they do nothing but dance?"

"You shall soon see what they can do," said the Elfin-King; and he called the youngest daughter to him. She was slight, and fair as moonlight, and the most graceful of all the sisters. She put a white wand between her lips and at once vanished: that was her accomplishment.

But the old goblin said he should not like his wife to have such an accomplishment, and he did not think his sons would like it either.

The second could walk by the side of herself, just as though she had a shadow, which elves and goblins never have.

The third sister was quite different; she had learned from the moor-witch how to brew ale, and how to lard Elf-puddings with glow-worms.

"She will make a capital housewife," said the old goblin; and, instead of drinking her health, he looked his approval, for he did not drink much.

The fourth Elfin-maiden carried a large gold harp; and when she struck the first chord every one lifted up the left leg—for elves are left-legged,—and at the second chord, they found they must do whatever she wished.

"A dangerous woman, that!" said the old goblin, and his sons got up and strode out of the Mount; they were tired of it.

"And what can the next daughter do?" asked the goblin.

"I have learned to love the north," replied she, "and I have resolved never to marry unless I may go to Norway."

But the youngest of the sisters whispered to the old man, "That is only because she has heard an old Norse

rhyme which says that when the end of the world shall come the Norwegian rocks shall stand firm amid the ruins; she is very much afraid of death, and therefore she wants to go to Norway."

"Ho, ho!" cried the old goblin, "sits the wind in that quarter? But what can the seventh and last do?"

"The sixth comes before the seventh," said the Elf-King; for he could count better than to make such a mistake. However, the sixth seemed in no hurry to come forward.

"I can only tell people the truth," said she. "No one cares for me or troubles about me, and I have enough to do to sew my shroud!"

And now came the seventh and last, and she could tell fairy tales, as many as any one could wish to hear.

"Here are my five fingers," said the old goblin; "tell me a story for each finger."

And the Elf-maiden took hold of his wrist and told her stories, and he laughed till his sides ached; and when she came to the fourth finger, there was a gold ring on it as though it knew it might be wanted. Then the old goblin said, "Hold fast what you have, the hand is yours! I will have you for a wife myself! Keep your other stories for next winter; we'll hear them then, for we all love fairy tales in Norway, and no one there can tell them so well as you. And then we will sit in our rocky halls, whilst the fir-logs are blazing and crackling in the stove, and drink mead out of the golden horns of the old Norse kings. How merry we shall be! But where are the boys?"

Where were the boys? Why, they were racing about in the fields and blowing out the poor will-o'-the-wisps, who were just getting ready to make a procession of torches.

"What is all this riot for?" said the old goblin. "I have been choosing you a mother; now you come and choose yourselves wives from among your aunts."

But his sons said they would rather make speeches and drink toasts; they had not the slightest wish to marry. So they made speeches, and drank toasts, and turned the glasses upside down to show that they were empty. Then they took off their coats, and lay down on the table and went to

sleep. But the old goblin danced round the hall with his young bride, and exchanged boots with her, because that is not so vulgar as exchanging rings.

"Listen, the cock is crowing!" exclaimed the lady-housekeeper. "We must make haste and shut the window-shutters, or the sun will spoil our complexions."

And then Elfin-mount closed.

But outside, in the cloven trunk, the lizards kept running up and down, and one and all said, "What a capital fellow that old goblin is!" "For my part, I prefer the boys," said the earth-worm; but he, poor wretch, could not see so his opinion was not worth much.

THE SNOW MAN

How white he looked as he stood there in the garden all alone! He had two three-cornered bits of tile in his head instead of eyes; his mouth was made of an old broken rake; and, as you may suppose, he had quite a fair supply of teeth. He had grown up that day amid the joyous shouts of boys and girls, the whirr of skates on the ice, the jingling of bells, and the crack of whips on the sledges. When he was finished, the boys and girls danced round him and gave three hearty cheers. Then they left him and went indoors.

"What splendid weather it is!" said he to himself. "This wind goes fairly through and through me, and makes me feel so strong that I quite crackle all over. What, I wonder, is that fiery red thing hanging in the sky? It needn't stare at me. It won't make me blink. I'll stare it out of countenance." And he watched the sun as it slowly sank down in the west.

Then the full moon rose, large, round, bright, and beautiful in the blue air. "There it comes again from another part," said the snow man, for he mistook the moon for the sun. "I have cured him of his staring, though; and now he may hang there and shine so that I can see myself. How I wish I could move! I would so like to bestir myself and skim across the ice like the children, but I'm no good at it. I don't know how to run."

"Off! Off!" barked the old watch-dog. He was so hoarse he could not say "Bow-wow!" like other dogs. "When the sun comes out he'll teach you to run. That's what he did last winter with one of your sort; and I remember it was the same the winter before. Off! Off! All have to go!"

"I do not understand you, friend," answered the snow

man. "Is that pale thing up there to teach me to run? To be sure it ran off a little while ago when I looked steadily at it, and now it slinks back from the other side."

"What you know doesn't come to much," said the dog; "but then, poor thing! what can one expect? After all, you were only rolled together to-day. The pale thing you see up there is the moon. It was the sun that went away a little while ago. It will come back to-morrow, and will teach you to run down into the ditch, you may take my word for that. Off! Off! We are to have a change of weather. I feel it in my left hind-leg; it aches so. Yes, I'm sure we are to have a change. Off! Off!" he barked. Then he turned round three times and crept into his kennel to sleep.

The weather did change. When morning came, a thick fog lay over the country. Later there came an ice-cold wind; which, with the keen frost, made the folk shiver. By and by the sun rose, scattering the fog, and making the hoar-frost glitter and sparkle as if everything were covered with diamond dust, and large diamonds were glittering over earth's snow-carpet; or as if countless little lights whiter than itself were shining amid the snow.

"What a lovely scene!" exclaimed a bright-eyed girl who had just come into the garden. She and her companion, a tall slim boy, stood beside the snow man, gazing with wonder and delight at the glittering scene. "Summer could offer us no finer sight than this," she said, almost in a whisper.

"Summer could not give us such a fine fellow as this," said her companion, pointing to the snow man. "He is splendid!" The girl laughed and nodded to the snow man, and then danced away with her companion over the snow, which creaked and crunched under their feet.

"Who are those two?" said the snow man to the watch-dog. "Do you know them? You have been longer in the yard than I."

"Do I know them?" answered the dog. "To be sure I do. They've been very good to me. She always pats me, and he throws me bones. I don't bite those two, I can tell you. I pity you, of course. It is not your fault that

you know so little. How could it be otherwise with one who came into the world only yesterday? As for me, I know every one belonging to this house. I was not always a mere watch-dog. There was a time when I had not to lie as I do now, chained here in the cold. Off! Off!" he barked; "it breaks my heart to think of those times."

"The cold is splendid!" said the snow man. "Do tell me your story, please; but for goodness' sake don't make that noise with your chain. It makes me shiver."

"Off! Off!" barked the dog. "Once I was a little fellow, small and pretty; at least they said I was. I lay on a velvet couch in those days, and moved in the very highest society. Nothing was too good for me then; the ladies used to kiss me and to wipe my paws with their lace handkerchiefs. But, later, I grew too big for them, and they gave me to the housekeeper. From where you are standing you can see into the room where I was master, for the housekeeper let me do as I liked. Dear, dear! How pleasant it all was! In the housekeeper's room there was the most beautiful stove in the world. How I did love to lie in front of that stove! And sometimes at night I crept under it, and it was so cosy. Ah me! You'd hardly believe it, but often yet I dream of that stove. Off! Off!"

"A stove!" said the snow man. "Is a stove, then, so pretty? Does it look like me?"

"Like you!" said the dog, with a growl. "Not in the least! It is glossy and black, and has a long neck with a brass body. It lives on wood, which the fire sputters out of its mouth. When one keeps close to it, it is very comfortable. If you look through the window, you can see it from where you stand."

The snow man looked in, and saw a brightly-polished thing with a brass body in which the fire glowed. At the sight a queer feeling crept over him. He did not know what it was. He could not explain it; for, you see, after all, he was only a snow man. "How could you give up such a place? And how, oh how could you leave such beauty?" he asked the dog.

"Had to," the latter replied. "I had no wish to do so,

I can tell you. I was driven out of doors and chained up here before I knew where I was."

"But what was wrong? Why did they treat you so cruelly?" asked the other.

"Oh, that was all right," said the dog. "Their notions of fair play and mine did not agree, that was all. Bone for bone is my notion of what's fair. So one day I bit the leg of the smallest youngster, because he kicked away my bone. There was a fine to-do, I need hardly say. They never thought of me; never thought how they would like to have one of their own bones kicked away. They dragged me from the room, thrashed me till I could hardly stand, and chained me up here, where I have been ever since. Off! Off! I can't forget how unfairly I was treated and how much I lost. Why, I lost even my voice! Don't you hear how hoarse I am? Off! Off! I can't even speak like other dogs."

The snow man was no longer listening to him. He was gazing into the housekeeper's room. He could not take his eyes from the stove, which he now saw was of about the same size as himself. "How queer I feel!" said he. "Shall I never go in there? I am sure there is no harm in wishing to do so. Oh, dear! I feel as if I must get in and lean against it, even if I have to break a window."

"In there you'll never get," said the dog. "Besides, if you did, the stove would soon make an end of you. Off! Off!"

"I fear that I am already as good as off," said the snow man. "I feel that I am breaking up."

The whole day long the snow man kept peeping through the window into the room. Night came, and the room and stove looked prettier even than during the day. From the stove there came a soft light, but when the door was opened a clear ruddy flame shot up, which lit up the white face of the snow man, and made his whole bosom glow.

The night was long, but it did not seem long to the snow man. As he stood there completely taken up with his own beautiful thoughts, he was perfectly happy. Moreover, it froze keenly, and he felt strong and well.

In the morning, the window of the room was covered with ice. The panes bore ice-flowers, more lovely even than a snow man's dream. But, alas! he could no longer see through them. The stove was hidden.

The frost was so keen a one, that the heart of a snow man should have been glad; but the ice-flowers on the panes did not thaw, and our snow man was anything but thankful for that. He was greatly disappointed, and wished at last there was no such thing as frost. All too soon for him his wish was granted.

Hardly had he uttered it, when the watch-dog came out of his kennel. "Off! Off!" he barked. "We are going to have a change of weather."

And the weather did change; it began to thaw. As the weather grew warmer the snow man grew thinner and thinner. He did not cry out—made, in fact, no complaint, which was a sure sign that his illness was serious. At last he grew so weak that one morning he broke down altogether and fell in a heap; and, lo! where he had stood something like a broomstick was left sticking up from the ground. It was the pole round which the children had built their snow man.

"Ah! now I see why you were so fond of the stove," said the yard-dog. "Why, there's the stove shovel hanging to the pole." He was right: the snow man had a stove scraper in his body. That was why he was so fond of the stove.

"It's all over now," said the yard-dog. And soon the winter passed, and the dog barked, "Off! Off! I'm glad the winter's gone."

But the boys and girls from the house sang:—

 Hie forth, green foresters, to the gay woods,
 Where the willows have donned their soft yellow hoods;
 Where loudly the lark and the missel-thrush sing
 Their songs of glad welcome and greeting to Spring.
 Now with these songsters, come, let us awake
 The quick gladsome echoes in dell and in brake.
 Welcome, a thousand times welcome, dear Sun;
 Winter's cold glooms and black frosts now are done.

And no one thought any more of the snow man.

THE GOLOSHES OF FORTUNE

A BEGINNING

IN a house near the New Market in Copenhagen, a large party was assembled. Half the guests were seated at card-tables; the rest were waiting to see what answer would be given to the question of their hostess: "Well, how shall we amuse ourselves?"

Among other subjects the conversation turned on the events of the Middle Ages, which some present held to have been a far more interesting period than our own times, Councillor Knap defending this opinion with so much zeal that the lady of the house immediately went over to his side. And then they both denounced Oersted's essays on *Ancient and Modern Times* in which the preference is given to our own. The Councillor declared that the times of King Hans, the close of the fifteenth century, were decidedly the best and happiest.

Leaving this discussion, we will now betake ourselves to the ante-room, where the cloaks, sticks, and goloshes were left.

Here two maidens were sitting—the one young, the other old,—and at first sight we thought them maid-servants come to accompany their mistresses home; but on a nearer view it was clear from their fine figures, their slim hands, their delicate complexion, their handsome dresses, and their noble bearing, that they were not servants. In fact, they were fairies. The younger was not Fortune herself, but she was the handmaid of one of Fortune's attendants, and was allowed to bestow Fortune's smaller favours. The elder, who looked somewhat gloomy, was Care, who always attends personally to her own affairs; for then she is sure no mistakes will happen.

They were telling each other where they had been that

day. The handmaid of Fortune had as yet to tell only of a few unimportant services she had rendered ; for instance, she had saved a lady's new bonnet from a shower, and got a worthy man a bow from a titled nobody. But she had something very wonderful to tell after all.

"I must explain to you also," said she, "that this is my birthday ; and in honour of it there has been entrusted to me a pair of goloshes which I am to have the honour of bestowing upon mortals. These goloshes have the power of making every one who puts them on imagine himself existing in any period, or in any place he wishes. Every wish with regard to time, place, or circumstance will at once be fulfilled, and mankind will at last have the chance of being completely happy."

"Mark me!" said Care, "he will, on the contrary, be very unhappy, and will bless the moment which frees him from your goloshes."

"Is that your opinion?" said the other. "Now, I will place them by the door ; and some one will put them on instead of his own, and he will be the fortunate man."

Such was the dialogue.

WHAT BEFELL THE COUNCILLOR

It was late when Councillor Knap, still deep in the times of King Hans, set out to return home ; and, as fate would have it, got hold of the Goloshes of Fortune instead of his own, and putting them on, stepped out into East Street. Through the magic power of the goloshes he was at once carried back to the fifteenth century as he had been wishing when he put them on. His feet sank into a mass of filth and mud, the streets of that period not having the advantage of a stone pavement.

"How disgustingly dirty it is here !" said the Councillor ; "why, the footpath is gone, and all the lamps are out !"

The moon had not yet risen high enough to give much light, and the air was foggy and thick, so that in the darkness everything seemed indistinct. At the nearest street corner a solitary lamp burned before an image of the

Virgin, but its light was so faint, that the Councillor did not notice it till he stood just underneath, and his eyes fell upon the painted figures of the Mother and Child.

"That must be some art collection," thought he, "and they have forgotten to take in the sign."

Only men in the dress of the Middle Ages passed by him.

"How odd those people look!" he thought. "I suppose they are coming from a masquerade."

Suddenly he heard the sound of drums and fifes; torches flashed brightly, and the Councillor started at seeing a most unusual procession pass by. First came a whole troop of drummers beating their drums very cleverly, and then followed the yeomen of the guard with their long bows and crossbows. The chief person in the throng was a clerical looking gentleman. The astonished Councillor asked what all this meant, and who the priest was.

"That is the Bishop of Zealand," was the reply.

"What in the name of common-sense can have possessed the Bishop?" said the Councillor, sighing and shaking his head. "It cannot possibly be the Bishop."

Still pondering over this matter, he walked on through East Street and over Bridge Place, without looking either to the right or left. The bridge leading to Palace Square was not to be found; but when he drew near to the edge of the water, two men, seated in a boat, drew near him.

"May we ferry your honour over to Holm?" asked they.

"Over to Holm!" repeated the Councillor, who was by no means aware of having been transported into the happy period he so much admired. "I wish to go to Little Turf Street in Christianshaven."

The men stared at him without answering.

"Only tell me where the bridge is," said he. "It is shameful that the lamps are not lighted, and it is so dirty that one might as well walk through a bog."

The more he talked to the boatmen the less he could understand them. At last he cried out, "I cannot understand your dialect!" and, very much provoked, he turned his back upon them. The bridge was not to be found, neither were there any railings.

"It is scandalous, the state this place is in!" cried he. Never had he found so much cause to complain of the times as on this evening. "I think I had better take a coach: but where are they?"

Not one was to be seen. "I must go back to the New Market. There are always coaches there, and without one I shall never find my way to Christianshaven."

So back he went through East Street, and had almost reached the end of it when the moon burst forth from behind the clouds. "What can that scaffolding be up there?" cried he, on seeing the East Gate, which in olden times stood at the end of East Street. He found an opening at last, and through it he went expecting to get to the New Market; but he saw instead a large green field. A few bushes grew here and there, and through the middle of the field flowed a broad canal or river. A few wretched wooden hovels, occupied by Dutch skippers, which made the place be called Dutch Meadow, stood on the opposite shore.

"Either I see a *fata morgana*, or else I have lost my wits," groaned the Councillor. "What can be the matter? what can be the matter?"

He turned back, perfectly convinced that he was ill. On re-entering the street he looked more closely at the houses, and saw that they were mostly built of wood, and that many had only thatched roofs.

"No, I must certainly be very far from well!" sighed he. "I drank only one glass of punch, but it seems that was one too many. It was very wrong of them to give us punch and hot salmon! I shall tell my lady hostess so. I have a great mind to go back now and let her know how ill I feel; but I fear that would seem so ridiculous, and very likely every one is gone to bed."

He looked for the house, but it was not to be found.

"It is horrible! I do not even know East Street. Why, there are no shops to be seen; I can see nothing but old, wretched, tumble-down houses. I must be really very ill: it is no use trying to deceive myself. But where in the world is the agent's house gone to? This is not it,

surely ! but I see that there are people still up : oh, dear ! I certainly feel thoroughly out of sorts. So saying, he pushed open the door from which the light came, and went in. It was a tavern of the olden times, a sort of beer-house. The room looked not unlike one of the old-fashioned clay-floored halls of Holstein. A number of people—seamen, citizens of Copenhagen, and a few students—sat within, deep in conversation, and took no heed of the new-comer.

"Pardon me," said the Councillor to the landlady, who came forward to meet him ; "I have just been taken ill. Will you be so kind as to send for a coach to take me to Christianshaven ?"

The woman stared and shook her head. Then she spoke to him in German, and the Councillor, thinking that she did not understand Danish, made his request in German. This, with his strange dress, made the woman think that he was a foreigner. One thing, however, was quite clear to her, namely, that the man was ill, so she brought him a jug of water. It had something of the taste of sea-water, though it had just been drawn from the well outside. The Councillor leaned his head on his hand, drew a deep breath, and thought over all the strange things that had happened to him.

"Is that this evening's *News* ?" asked he, when he saw the woman putting away a large sheet of paper.

She did not understand his meaning ; but she gave him the paper, which proved to be a coarse wood-engraving of a meteor that had been seen not long before in the town of Cologne. "This is very old !" said the Councillor, quite excited by the sight of such a rare print. "How did you come by this wonderful rarity ? It is highly interesting, although the whole thing is a mistake. These meteors are now explained to be the reflections of the Northern Lights ; they are probably caused by electricity."

Those who sat near him and heard his speech looked on him with astonishment, and one of them rose respectfully from his seat, took off his hat, and said, with a face of wondrous gravity, "You must be a very learned man, monsieur !"

"Oh no, indeed!" returned the Councillor. "I can only talk upon subjects that everybody understands."

"Modesty is a fine virtue," said the man. "But I should say in answer to your speech, 'I think differently'; only, for the present, I suspend my judgment."

"May I ask to whom I have the pleasure of speaking?" inquired the Councillor.

"I am a Bachelor of Divinity," replied the man.

This answer satisfied the Councillor, the description agreed with the dress. "He must be some old-fashioned country schoolmaster," he thought; "an original, such as one meets with sometimes in Jutland."

"This is of a truth no schoolroom or lecture hall," continued the stranger, "yet I pray you to continue your discourse. You are, doubtless, well read in the works of the ancients?"

"Oh yes!" answered the Councillor; "I am fond of reading all ancient writings that are profitable, and, indeed, I like modern books as well, all but those *Tales of Everyday Life*, of which, I think, we have enough in reality."

"*Tales of Everyday Life!*" repeated our Bachelor.

"Oh, I mean those new novels of which people talk so much."

"And yet," said the man, with a smile, "they are very witty, and are much read at court. The King particularly likes the romance of Sir Iwain and Sir Gawain, which, you know, treats of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table. He and his courtiers once jested merrily over it."

"It is strange that I have never read it!" said the Councillor. "It must be one of Heiberg's newest."

"No," said the man, "it is not by Heiberg, but by Godfrey von Gehmen."

"Is he the author?" cried the Councillor. "That is a very old name! Was he not the first man who printed books in Denmark?"

"Yes, he is certainly our first printer," returned the stranger.

So far, so good. And now one of the honest burghers began to speak of the dreadful pestilence that had raged a

few years before, meaning that of 1484. The Councillor thought they were talking of the cholera, so that also passed off well enough. The war of the Pirates (1490) was so near that it was naturally spoken of. The English pirates, they said, had taken their ships on their very shores; and the Councillor, who had lived through the events of 1801, joined with them heartily in abusing the English. But after this the talk did not go on smoothly. Every moment they were more and more at cross purposes. The honest Bachelor was so ignorant that the simplest, most matter-of-fact assertions of the Councillor sounded to him far too positive and fantastic. They looked at each other quite angrily. The Bachelor at last spoke Latin, in the hope of being better understood; but it was all of no use.

"How are you now?" asked the hostess, pulling the Councillor by the sleeve. In the heat of debate he had entirely forgotten all that had happened.

"Goodness me! where am I?" said he, feeling his head dizzy again.

"We will have claret or mead, or Bremer beer," cried one of the guests, "and you shall drink with us."

Two girls came in, one of them wearing a parti-coloured hood. They poured out the wine, bowed to the company, and withdrew. The Councillor shivered from head to foot.

"What is all this? what can it mean?" said he; but he had to drink with them. The good man could not withstand their kindness. He was in despair, and when one of them said he was tipsy, he never for a moment doubted the fact. He begged them to fetch a coach, and then they thought he was speaking Muscovitish. Never had he been before in such vulgar company. "One might suppose the country had become heathen again," thought he. "This is the most dreadful moment of my life!" He thought of getting under the table and creeping out of the room. He tried to do so, but before he got to the door, the others seeing what he was about, caught hold of his feet. By good luck the goloshes fell off, and with them the whole scene of enchantment vanished. The Councillor saw a lamp burning brightly before him, and behind the lamp a large house.

Everything was familiar to him. He was once more in the East Street he knew. He was lying on the pavement kicking his legs against the door of a house, and exactly opposite sat the watchman enjoying a sound sleep.

"To think that I have lain here in the street dreaming!" said he. "Yes, to be sure, this is East Street, so gay and handsome, and so well lighted! It is terrible that one glass of punch should have had such an effect upon me."

Two minutes afterwards he was comfortably seated in a coach, which soon brought him to Christianshaven. He remembered all the trouble he had had, and prized the more that happy reality, our own time, which, with all its faults, he now found far pleasanter than the period of which he had made trial.

THE WATCHMAN'S ADVENTURES

"Well! there lies a pair of goloshes," said the watchman. "They must be the lieutenant's who lodges upstairs, for they lie just by the door."

The honest man would have rung and handed them to their supposed owner, for there were still lights burning in the lieutenant's room, but he feared to disturb the other people in the house, and so he let them lie.

"These things must keep one's feet very cosy and warm," said he, "they are made of such nice soft leather." Then he slipped his feet into them and they fitted exactly. "What a queer world this is!" said he. "The lieutenant up there might, if he chose, get into his warm bed, but he doesn't. There he goes pacing up and down the room. He should be a happy man. He has neither wife nor children to provide for, and he goes to parties every evening. I wish I were he, I know I should be happy."

No sooner had he uttered the wish than the goloshes did their work. The watchman was at once changed into the lieutenant. There he stood in his chamber holding between his finger and thumb a tiny sheet of rose-tinted note-paper, on which a poem was written—a poem written by the lieutenant himself. Here is the lieutenant's poem:—

WOULD I WERE RICH

"Would I were rich!" when but a thoughtless child
 I oft exclaimed, among my playmates wild;
 "Would I were rich! an officer I'd be,
 With sword and feathered plume so gay to see!"
 And time passed on; one wish was granted me,
 An officer I was; yet, poor as ever—
 Thou know'st it, Lord, whose help forsook me never!

One eve I sat, my spirits fresh and young,
 A little girl about me fondly clung;
 For fairy tales she craved—a countless store
 Had I of these, though otherwise so poor.
 That pretty child! how well she loved my lore!
 How oft she promised ne'er from me to sever!
 Thou know'st it, Lord—be Thou her guardian ever!

"Would I were rich!" I lift to Heaven my prayer;
 The child has ripened to a maiden fair.
 She is so gentle, graceful, good, and kind—
 Had she my heart's sad secret but divined,
 Could I, as erst, in her eyes favour find?—
 No, I am poor, and must be silent ever,—
 So wills our Lord, whose wisdom erreth never.

Would I were rich in patience, as in love!
 Then might my prayer meet answer from above.
 Thou, my beloved, love me in return,
 From these weak lines my youth's sad history learn;
 But no, the truth thou must not yet discern—
 For I am poor, my future dark as ever—
 Bless her, good Lord, and leave her friendless never!

Yes, people do write such stuff when they are in love, but sensible people take care not to print it. A lieutenant, poor and in love! Could any one imagine a state of things more wretched?

The lieutenant felt his misery keenly. He leaned his head against the window-frame, and sighed deeply:

"The poor watchman in the street is far happier than I," he thought. "He knows not what I call want. He has a

home, a wife, and children, who weep with him in his sorrow and rejoice with him in his joy. Oh, how much happier should I be could I exchange my situation for his and wander through life with no other hopes than he has! Yes, he is certainly happier than I am."

At that moment the watchman became once more a watchman. The Goloshes of Fortune had caused his being to pass into that of the lieutenant's; but there, as we have just seen, he felt less satisfied, and preferred the life he had a few minutes before despised. Thus the watchman became a watchman again.

"That was an ugly dream," said he; "but it was certainly droll. I thought I was the lieutenant up there, and yet I was far from happy. I missed my wife, and the dear babies who are always ready to smother me with kisses."

He sat still thinking over his dream; it would not go out of his head. The Goloshes of Fortune were still on his feet. Suddenly a falling star shot across the sky.

"There goes that!" said he. "Yet there are still quite enough up there. I should like very much to be able to look at those bright things closer, especially the moon. Now, if I could but just make a little jump up to the moon, I should not mind leaving my body behind lying here on the steps."

There are certain things in the world one must be very cautious about uttering, and doubly cautious if one happens to have on his feet the Goloshes of Fortune. Hear, now, what happened to the watchman.

There are few who do not know of the great power of steam; for it is shown in the rapidity with which we travel over the country by rail or across the sea in steamships. But when compared to the speed with which light travels, the speed of the fastest steamer or the quickest train is like the movement of a sloth or the crawling of a snail. Light travels nineteen million times faster than the fleetest race-horse, and electricity is far swifter than light. Death is an electric shock which we receive in our hearts, and borne by the electricity the liberated soul flies swiftly away. The

light from the sun takes only eight minutes and a few seconds to reach the earth, but the mind travels over the same distance in an instant. To thought, the distances between the heavenly bodies is no harder to pass over than those between the houses of friends living in the same town, even when these are tolerably near. Here, below, the electric shock in the heart deprives us of all use of our bodies—unless, like the watchman, we happen to have the Goloshes of Fortune on our feet.

In a very few seconds the watchman had passed over the two hundred and forty thousand miles, and had got to the moon, which, as every one knows, is made of much finer materials than the earth, materials that we should call as soft as new-fallen snow. He found himself upon one of the many mountains that may be seen in Dr. Madler's large map of the moon. The interior of the mountain was shaped like a bowl, and was about half a mile in depth. At the bottom of the bowl lay a large town, of whose appearance an idea might be formed by putting the white of an egg into a glass of water, for the stuff of which it was made was just as soft; and towers with cupolas and hanging balconies, all perfectly transparent, hovered to and fro in thin, clear air. Our earth was seen above, looking like a great dark-red ball.

He saw a number of creatures around him, who must have been what we call human beings, but they looked very different from us. They seemed quite of another species; and it would take a more luxuriant fancy than that of any astronomer to picture anything like them. They had a language of their own—I suppose no one would expect the soul of the watchman to understand it, nevertheless, he did understand it, for our spirits have far greater powers than we are inclined to believe.

Thus the watchman's soul understood perfectly the language of the dwellers in the moon. They were disputing about our earth, and doubting whether it could be inhabited. The air, they thought, must be too thick for any reasonable moon-dweller to breathe; and indeed most were of opinion that of all the heavenly bodies the moon alone was inhabited. They also discussed politics.

But let us now betake ourselves to East Street, and see what has become of the watchman's body.

Lifeless on the steps he sat. His club had fallen out of his hand. His eyes were staring upward to the moon to which his soul had wandered.

"What o'clock is it, watchman?" asked a passer-by. But the watchman gave him no answer. Thinking him asleep the man gently tapped him on the nose to waken him, when to his surprise and horror the watchman's body fell forward and lay at full length on the ground. The watchman was dead! All his companions were greatly shocked when they heard what had happened, for they thought he was dead. There was a great deal of talk about the affair, and at daybreak the body was carried to the hospital, where, naturally enough, the first thing they did was to take off the goloshes.

The soul must now return; she flew straight to the body, and in a few seconds there was once more life in the man. And he declared that this had been the most dreadful night he had ever passed; that not for any money would he endure such another. However, all was over now.

That same day he left the hospital, but the goloshes were left behind.

AN EVENTFUL MOMENT—A MOST UNUSUAL JOURNEY

Every one in Copenhagen knows Frederick's Hospital, and where it is situated; but as others besides dwellers in Copenhagen may read this story it may be well to give a short description of it.

The hospital is separated from the street by a rather high railing, the iron bars of which stand so far apart that it is said some very thin patients have at times squeezed themselves through, and gone to pay visits to their friends in the town. The part of the body which they had most difficulty in squeezing through was the head; so here, as is often the case in life, the small heads were the most fortunate. So much by way of introduction.

One of the young volunteers, of whom it might be said,

physically speaking, that he had a big head, happened to be on guard that evening at the hospital. The rain was pouring down, yet, in spite of the weather and the size of his head, he wished to go out for a quarter of an hour. It was not worth while, he thought, to trouble the porter about such a trifle, when he could by an effort slip through the iron rails. While thinking over the matter, he stumbled on the goloshes which the watchman had left. That these were the Goloshes of Fortune of course never occurred to him; but as they would be serviceable to him in such weather, he put them on. The question with him was whether he could squeeze himself through or not; he had never tried before, so he stood looking at the railings.

"I wish to goodness I had my head through!" said he, and instantly the head, though very large and thick, glided through quite easily—such was the power of the goloshes. But the body must needs follow, and that was impossible.

"Ugh! I am too stout," said he. "I thought I would be all right if I got my head through; but now I see I shall never manage it. Then he tried to draw his head back, but that was impossible. He could move his neck about easily enough, and that was all. His first feeling was one of anger, then he lost all hope and became very down-hearted. The Goloshes of Fortune had brought him into the most distressing situation, and, unfortunately, it never entered his head to wish himself free; instead, he kept twisting his head and struggling, but he could not stir from the spot. The rain poured down; not a person was to be seen in the street. He could not reach the porter's bell. How in the world was he to get loose? It was probable that he must stand there till morning; and that then a smith would have to be sent for to file away one of the bars. All this would take time. The boys belonging to the charity school opposite would be going to school; and all the sailors of the district would hasten to the spot for the pleasure of seeing him in the pillory. What a crowd there would be! "Ugh!" cried he, "the blood is rushing to my head! It will drive me mad! I am half-crazy already! Oh, I wish I were free!"

Now this was what he should have said before. The moment he had uttered the wish, his head was free. Into the house he rushed, nearly distracted by the fright which the Goloshes of Fortune had occasioned him.

But we must not suppose that his adventures were ended. No, indeed; the worst were yet to come.

The night passed away, as did also the following day, and the goloshes had not been taken away. In the evening there were amateur dramatic readings at the little theatre in Kannike Street. The house was crammed. A new poem, called "My Aunt's Spectacles," was being recited.

According to this the poet's aunt, who in the good old times would certainly have been burnt as a witch, has wonderful skill in fortune telling. She seems to know beforehand all the chances and changes of this changing world; and though not yet in the "sunset of life," her "mystical lore" makes

Coming events cast their shadows before.

Every one wishes to find out her secret, but in vain; she will reveal it to no one. At last her youngest and favourite nephew begs her so earnestly to tell him how she does it that her resolution gives way; and putting on a face of solemn importance, she takes off her spectacles and hands them to him, declaring that the power of second sight is vested in them, and in them only. "Try them yourself, my boy," she says, seeing him look doubtful. "Go to any place of public resort, get a place from which you can overlook the crowd; put on my spectacles, and immediately all the people you see will be to your eyes like a pack of cards spread out on a table; their most secret thoughts and wishes will be laid bare, and you will be able without difficulty to foresee their future lot."

The youth can scarcely wait an instant to thank her for her kindness, he is in such haste to test the power of the spectacles. He remembers that there are dramatic readings at the theatre that evening. Nothing could be more convenient, for nowhere could he overlook a crowd of people so easily as from the stage. He accordingly goes

there, and presenting himself to the audience, puts on his spectacles and begs permission to tell the fortunes of the company. He begins by expressing astonishment at the curious sight opened to his view. He drops mysterious hints about the queen of hearts, "whose dark thrilling eyes," he declares, "are fixed with intensity upon the knave of diamonds. He would give worlds to have such glances directed towards himself." The knave of clubs he next notices as "the richest man in that assembly, although unfortunately,"—but here he stops, as if unwilling to reveal family secrets. He then proposes to pick the happiest person present; the one who should live longest; to tell the future fortunes of the nation; the success which should attend forthcoming representations at the theatre. Still he avoids giving simple direct information, declaring himself quite puzzled. He is resolved not to hurt the feelings of the audience by his communications, and yet he fears that they must distrust his boasted powers. Thus he can only, with the deepest respect, leave the company to their own conclusions and bid them farewell.

The poem, absurd as it was, being well recited, was received with great applause. Amongst the audience was our friend from the hospital, who seemed to have entirely forgotten his adventure of the preceding evening. The Goloshes of Fortune were again on his feet, for as no one had claimed them, and the streets were dirty, he thought he might as well make use of them.

The first part of the poem pleased him very much, and though his attention was soon distracted, the idea still haunted him. He fancied he should like to have such a pair of spectacles himself, for then he might be able to see into the hearts of people, and that would be far more interesting than knowing what was going to happen. What is to happen shows itself; but no one ever knows what is in the heart. "Suppose it were only the hearts of the row of gentlemen and ladies sitting on the front benches, if I could look into them, what a revelation there would be," thought he. "That lady, I fancy, keeps a store for goods of all descriptions. How I would like to peer into every

corner and closely examine her collection. There is another there that is empty, and would probably be all the better for being thoroughly cleaned out. There may be some too well filled with valuable goods. Ah, yes," he sighed, "I know one in which everything is of excellent quality; but there is a servant there already that is the only drawback. Perhaps, from some I should hear the words, 'Please walk in.' I only wish I could glide like a pleasant thought from heart to heart."

This was enough for the goloshes. The man immediately shrank up and began a most unusual journey, for he travelled through the hearts of the front row of spectators. The first heart he entered was that of a lady, and for a moment he thought himself in a room in the Hospital for the Deformed, for the walls seemed to have hanging all round the plaster casts of deformed parts. There was, however, this difference: in the hospital the casts are taken when the patients enter; here they had been taken after the originals had departed. They were, in fact, casts of very dear and particular friends, whose deformities, whether of body or mind, were thus carefully preserved.

Suddenly he passed into another female heart; but this appeared to him like some spacious solemn sanctuary. The white dove of innocence fluttered over the altar; and he would have fallen on his knees before it, but that he must away—into the next heart. Still, however, he heard the deep tones of the organ, and it seemed as though he had become another and a better man. The next heart also was a sanctuary which he felt almost unworthy to enter. It represented a mean little garret in which lay a sick mother. Yet warm sunshine streamed through the open window, beautiful roses bloomed in the little wooden box on the roof, and two sky-blue birds warbled from their branches a glorious song of joy, peace, and love, whilst the sick mother implored a blessing upon her daughter.

Next he crept on hands and knees through an over-filled butcher's shop; there was meat, and nothing but meat all round him. This was the heart of a rich, respectable man whose name would no doubt be in the Directory.

He next entered the heart of this man's wife. It was an old ruined dove cot; the husband's portrait was made use of as a weathercock, and seemed connected in some way with all the doors, which opened and shut as the portrait turned.

Thence he glided into a cabinet formed of mirrors, like a room shown in Castle Rosenberg. These mirrors, however, possessed the power of magnifying to an almost incredible degree. In the middle, on the floor, sat, like the Dalai Lama, the insignificant I of the owner wholly occupied in contemplating with rapture his own astounding greatness.

After this, he found himself in what seemed a needle-case filled with sharp-pointed needles. "Surely," thought he, "this must be the heart of an old maid!" But no; it was that of a young officer who wore several orders, and was said to be a man of understanding and refinement.

The poor youth crept out of the last heart in the row quite bewildered. He was quite frightened at the strange things that had happened to him. He could not understand it all.

"Alas!" he sighed, "I am going mad! I feel dreadfully hot; the blood is rushing to my head!" All at once he remembered the queer thing that had happened the evening before, how his head had remained fixed between the iron railings in front of the hospital. "That is it!" said he: "I must attend to it before it is too late. Perhaps a Russian bath would help. How I wish I were lying on one of the upper shelves!"

Forthwith he found himself lying on the highest shelf of a vapour bath with all his clothes on, boots, goloshes, everything. Hot drops of water trickled down from the ceiling on his face.

"Ugh!" shrieked he, starting up in astonishment and rushing to the plunge bath. The attendant almost shrieked when he saw a man standing with all his clothes on in the bath. Our hero had just presence of mind enough to whisper in explanation, "'Tis for a wager"; but the first thing he did when he got home was to lay a large blistering plaster over his chest, and another across his back, to draw out his madness.

Next morning his back was covered with blood, and this was all that he had gained from the Goloshes of Fortune.

THE METAMORPHOSES OF THE COPYING CLERK

All this time we have forgotten the watchman, but he has not forgotten the goloshes he had found in the street; so he went to the hospital and took them home; but, as neither the lieutenant nor any one else in the street would own them, they were at last taken to the police office.

"They look exactly like mine," said one of the copying clerks, placing them by the side of his own. "No eye but a shoemaker's would know the one pair from the other."

"Mr. Clerk," said a servant who just then entered with some papers. The clerk turned round to answer, and when he was done with the man he again looked at the goloshes; he could not make up his mind whether the pair on the right or on the left were his own. "It must be those that are wet!" thought he; but he was wrong, for the wet pair were the Goloshes of Fortune. So he drew on the goloshes, put his papers into his pocket, and tucked under his arm some manuscripts of which he had to make abstracts at home. It was now Sunday morning; and the weather was fine. "A walk to Fredericksberg," thought he, "will do me good." So away he went.

He walked on for some time in such a matter-of-fact fashion that the goloshes had no chance of showing their magical powers. He neither thought nor wished.

In the avenue he met an acquaintance, one of our younger poets, who told him that he was going next day to set out on his summer excursion.

"What! roaming again?" said the clerk. "Happy man that you are, free to go wherever you please," said the clerk, "while we poor mortals are tied here by the leg."

"But the chain is fastened to the bread-fruit tree!" laughed the poet. "You need have no care for the morrow, for when you grow old a pension is given you."

"For all that, your lot is the happier," said the clerk quite seriously. "It must be very pleasant to sit under

a tree all day writing verses, and then to have flattering speeches made to you by all the world. Besides, you are your own master. Ah! you should only try for once how wearisome it is to spend all your time in an office, writing about some trivial matter or other!"

The poet shook his head, and the clerk did the same, for each kept his own opinion; and so they parted.

"They are strange people those poets!" thought the clerk. "I should like very much to understand them—to be a poet myself; I am sure I should not write such whining nonsense as some of them do. What a lovely spring day this is! just the day for a poet! The air is so clear, the clouds are so beautiful, and such a delicious fragrance comes from the trees and flowers! I have not felt as I do now for many years."

It will be seen from the latter part of this speech that he had in truth become a poet—not that any great change was manifest in him. It is absurd for people to think that a poet must be different from other men. There are many who are in their nature more poetical than some of the writers of poetry. The chief difference is that the poet has a better memory, and can keep a firmer grasp of the thoughts and feelings that occur to him, till he has put them into words, than the others can do. But the change from the everyday commonplace way of looking at things to the way in which they are looked on by more gifted natures is a great one, and after a time the clerk became aware of it.

"This delightful fragrance!" said he, "how it reminds me of my Aunt Magdalen's violets! Ah! that was when I was a little boy. What a long time it is since I thought of her, good old aunt! She used to live behind the Exchange yonder. Let the winter be ever so severe, she always kept a bough or a few green shoots in water. How sweet the violets were! And then I used to lay a heated penny on the frozen window-pane to make a little peep-hole; what a pretty view I had through it! There was the canal with the ships deserted by the sailors, lying so still amid the frozen water; one noisy crow formed their whole crew. And then when at last the spring breezes blew, everything

started into life. With song and merriment, as the ice broke up, the ships were tarred and rigged, and sailed away to foreign lands. But I have always stayed behind, and must always do so, sitting in the office and seeing others get their passports to travel. Such, alas! is my lot!" sighed he. Then suddenly recollecting himself, he said, "Why, what can ail me? I have never felt in this way before: it must be the spring air; it gives me almost as much pain as pleasure!" He felt in his pocket for his papers. "These will give me something else to think of," said he, as his eye wandered over the first sheet. "'Madame Sigbrith, an Original Tragedy, in Five Acts,'" read he aloud. "What is this? Why, it is in my own hand-writing! Did I write this tragedy? 'The Intrigue on the Promenade, or the Day of Reckoning, A. Vaudeville.' How came all these papers into my pocket? Somebody must have put them in. And here is a letter!" It was from the manager of a theatre. The piece was rejected, and the manager's opinion of it, not too courteously expressed, was not at all flattering. "Hem! hem!" said the clerk, and he sat down on a bench. His thoughts were bright, his spirits fresh; involuntarily he plucked a flower near him. It was only a common daisy, yet what botanists take several long lectures to teach this floweret explained in a minute. She related the myth of her birth, spoke of the power of the sunshine which had unfolded her delicate leaves and drawn forth her fragrance. She awoke in the poet's mind thoughts of those human struggles that stir in the same way the feelings of man. Air and light are the lovers of the flowers; but light is the lover they prefer; to the light they turn, and only when the light has vanished do they shut up their petals and sleep in the bosom of the air. "It is the light that gives me my beauty," said the flower.

A boy, a few paces distant, just then threw his stick into a ditch. The water splashed up among the green branches above, and the clerk thought of the millions of tiny creatures that must have been hurled upwards in those drops of water. To them it must have been as fearful as it would be for us to be suddenly whirled high into the

regions of the clouds. As he mused over this fancy the clerk smiled at the great change he felt in his own feelings. "I know," he said, "that I am only dreaming; but how strange it is that I should dream, and yet be aware all the while that I am dreaming! I wonder whether I shall remember this to-morrow when I awake. I am happier than I ever was before; I seem thoroughly awake; have a clear perception of everything; and yet I am sure that if I have any recollection of my present thoughts and feelings to-morrow, they will all appear to me nonsense. So it is with all those clever and beautiful things one says and hears in one's dream: they are just like fairy gold, rich and precious at night, but in the morning found to be nothing but stones and withered leaves. Alas!" said he, sighing and looking up at the birds as they hopped from bough to bough, "their lot is far happier than mine. They can fly, and flying is a glorious power. Happy he who is born with wings. Ah, yes, if I could change myself into anything, it should be into a little bird!"

At the same moment the sleeves and tails of his coat were joined together and formed wings; his clothes became feathers and the goloshes claws. He was aware of the change, and laughed inwardly. "Well," said he, "now I may be sure that I am dreaming, though, certainly, I never dreamed anything so wonderful as this before!"

He flew up into the green branches and sang; but there was no poetry in the song, for the poetic nature was gone. The goloshes could only do one thing at a time. The clerk wished to be a poet, and he became a poet; he then wished to be a little bird, and a bird he became, but in doing so he ceased to be a poet.

"This is pleasant," said he; "all day I sit in the office among dry legal documents, and at night I can dream of flying about in the form of a lark in Fredericksberg Gardens. What a capital farce it would make!"

He then flew down from the branch, turned his head on all sides, and struck with his beak the tender blades of grass, which, compared with his present size, appeared as large as the palm branches of North Africa.

In another moment all was darkness; something of immense size and very heavy was thrown over him. It was a boy's cap, and the hand of the boy passed underneath it and seized the clerk by the back and wings so roughly that in the first impulse of alarm he cried out, "You impudent young rascal! I am clerk at the Police Office!" But this sounded to the boy like "tweet, tweet," so he tapped the bird on the beak and walked away with it.

He soon met two schoolboys who were better off than himself, and they bought the bird for fourpence. And thus the copying clerk was taken back to Copenhagen.

"It is well that I am only dreaming," said the clerk, "or I should be really angry. First I was a poet, and now I am a lark! I suppose it was the poetic nature which changed me into a bird. It is a miserable condition enough, especially when one falls into the hands of boys. I wonder what will become of me next?"

The boys brought him into a nicely furnished room, where they were received by a stout, good-humoured looking lady; but she was by no means pleased at their bringing in with them "a common field-bird." However, she gave the boys permission for this once to put their little prisoner into the empty cage that hung by the window. "Perhaps that will please Poll," added she, smiling tenderly on a large green parroquet who was swinging himself in his splendid cage. "It is Poll's birthday, so the little field-bird must come and congratulate him."

Poll did not answer, but kept on swinging himself backwards and forwards with a very stately air; but a pretty little canary, that had been brought only the summer before from the warm, spicy land of his birth, at once began a loud song of welcome.

"Be quiet, you noisy thing!" said the lady, throwing a white handkerchief over his cage.

"Tweet, tweet!" said the canary, "that is a dreadful snowstorm," and then he became quite quiet.

The clerk, or, as the lady called him, the field-bird, was put into a cage close to the canary's, and not far from that of the parrot. The only words that Poll knew were,

"Come, let us be men!" and comical enough it sounded sometimes. Everything else that he said or shrieked was as unintelligible as the twittering of the canary, except to the clerk, who, being now a bird himself, could understand both his companions perfectly well.

"Once," sang the canary, "I flew about among green palms and flowering almond-trees. I flew with my brothers and sisters over the beautiful flowers and the clear, mirror-like lake bordered with fragrant shrubs. There, too, were parrots with glorious plumage. They used to tell such long and merry tales."

"Those were wild birds," said the parrot, "and utterly uneducated. Come, let us be men! Why don't you laugh? If the lady and her visitors can laugh at it, surely you can do so too. Not to be able to enjoy a good joke is a great defect. Come, let us be men!"

"Do you remember those lovely maidens who used to dance in the tents under the shade of the wide-spreading trees, so tall and so full of blossom? Do you remember the delicious fruit and the cool juice from the wild herbs that grew at their feet?"

"Oh yes!" said the parrot; "but I am much better off here. I am well fed, and treated with consideration. I know I am a clever fellow, and that is enough for me. Let us be men! You, indeed, have what they call a poetic soul, but I have solid acquirements and plenty of wit. You have genius, but no prudence. You are always bursting out with those wild notes of yours, and are for ever being silenced. No one ever covers up my cage. No indeed, for I cost a good deal more than you did; besides, I can defend myself with my beak, and confound them with my wit. Come, let us be men!"

"Oh, my beloved, my beautiful fatherland!" sang the canary, "ever will I sing of thy dark green trees, and thy peaceful streams, where the drooping branches kiss the dancing waters. Ever will I sing of the gladsome movements of my bright-hued brothers and sisters, as they sported and sang among those splendid cactuses!"

"Do cease from those doleful memories," said the parrot.

"Sing something to make us laugh. Laughter is a sign of the highest intellect. Do you think that a dog or a horse can laugh? No, but they can cry; only men can laugh. Ha! ha! ha!" screamed Poll, and ended with a repetition of his single piece of wit—"Come, let us be men!"

"Little grey Danish bird," said the canary, "you too are a prisoner. It may be cold in your native woods, but there at least you have freedom. Oh, fly away! They have forgotten to shut the door of your cage, and the window is open. Do fly away!"

Instinctively the clerk hopped out of his cage. At that same moment the half-opened door was heard to creak, and stealthily the cat, with eyes green and glistening, crept into the room. The canary fluttered about in his cage; the parrot flapped his wings and screamed, "Come, let us be men!" the clerk was seized with mortal terror and flew out of the window. For a long while he flew over houses and streets, but at last he felt the need of rest. The house exactly opposite seemed familiar to him. One window was open. In he flew, into his own room. He perched upon the table.

Almost unconsciously he repeated the parrot's witticism, "Come, let us be men!" and the next moment the bird had become the copying-clerk again and was comfortably seated upon his own table. "Heaven preserve us!" thought he. "How could I have gotten up here and fallen asleep? What an uncomfortable dream, too, I have had!"

THE LAST AND BEST GIFT THE GOLOSHES COULD BESTOW

Early next morning, while the clerk was yet in bed, a knocking was heard at his door. It was his neighbour, the young divinity student, who lived on the same floor. He came in.

"Lend me your goloshes," said he. "It is damp in the garden though the sun is shining, and I should like to go out and have a smoke."

He drew on the goloshes, and was soon walking in the

garden. There was only one plum-tree and one apple-tree; but in a town even such a small garden as this is very convenient. It was just six o'clock. A post-horn was sounding in the street, and the student heard it as he walked up and down.

"Oh, to travel! to travel!" cried he, "that is the greatest happiness this world can give! that is my chief, my highest wish! Then would my restless longings be stilled. I would like to see that beautiful Switzerland, and to visit Italy; I would——"

It was well for him and for us too that the goloshes fulfilled his wish without delay, else he might have gone roaming, nobody knows where. He travelled. He was travelling in Switzerland, shut up with eight others inside a diligence. He had a bad pain in his head, a worse in his back, and his feet were miserably swollen by their long confinement in tight boots. He was between sleeping and waking. In his right pocket were his letters of credit, in his left his passport, and in the little leather purse inside his waistcoat a few louis d'or. Whenever he nodded, he dreamt of the loss of one or other of these treasures. So he was continually starting up, his hand moving in a triangle from the right-hand pocket to the left, and thence to his bosom, to feel whether all were safe. Umbrellas, sticks, and hats swung from the roof of the vehicle, shaking together over his head and obstructing the really very striking view opening before him. As he looked at it he thought of the words of a poet who has sung of Switzerland, but whose poems have not yet been printed:—

All here is lovely as a poet's dream,
And Mount Blanc proudly towers into the air.
While the means last, this dwelling-place I deem
For beauty-lovers fit beyond compare.

Dark, gloomy, and grand was the landscape that now spread around. The huge pine woods looked like tufts of heather on the slopes of those mighty mountains whose summits were lost in the clouds.

Presently it began to snow, and the wind blew cold.

"Ah!" sighed he, "if I were only on the other side of

the Alps, it would be summer, and I should be able to get my letters of credit cashed. The anxiety I feel about this matter keeps me from enjoying Switzerland. Oh, that I were on the other side!"

And in a moment he was on the other side, travelling in Italy, between Florence and Rome. Before him, amid the dark, blue mountains, lay the lake of Thrasyment, looking like a sheet of burnished gold in the light of the evening sky. Here, on the spot where Carthaginian Hannibal defeated the Roman general Flaminius, peaceful vines lovingly entwine their bright, graceful tendrils, and pretty half-naked children are guarding a herd of coal-black swine crowded under the group of fragrant laurel-trees growing by the wayside. Could we do justice to this picture, every one would exclaim with delight, "Beautiful Italy!" But the divinity student and his fellow-travellers were not at all inclined to think of its beauty. Poisonous flies and mosquitoes swarmed round them. Vainly did the travellers strike at their tormentors with a myrtle branch. The flies only stung the more. There was not a person in the carriage whose face was not swollen and disfigured by their bites. As for the poor horses, the flies settled upon them in swarms; and if the driver alighted from his seat to chase them away, in another moment they were back again.

The sun set, and an icy cold feeling seemed to fall on everything, though it did not last long. It was like breathing the cold, damp air of a vault after a day's enjoyment of the warmth of summer. The clouds and the hills around took that peculiar green hue which is sometimes observed in old paintings, and which to the untravelled eye seems unnatural. It was a beautiful scene. But the stomachs of the travellers were empty, their bodies wearied; all the ardent longings of their heart were for a comfortable lodging for the night—a blessing scarcely to be expected.

Their road led through an olive grove, just as at home they might have had to wind their way through clumps of willows. And here stood a lonely inn. Some half-score begging cripples lay in front of it; the smartest among them looking like Famine's eldest son, just come of age. Some

were blind, some crawled about on withered limbs, and some displayed shrunk arms and fingerless hands. Here was wretchedness indeed flaunting in tatters. "Eccellenza, miserabili!" they moaned, showing their scars and deformities. The hostess clad in a dirty blouse, her feet bare, and her hair in disorder, received the travellers. The doors were kept together by pack-thread; the floor of the room was of bricks half broken up; bats flew backwards and forwards under the low ceiling; and as to the odour! . . .

"Let them lay the supper in the stable," said one of the travellers, "then we shall know what we are breathing."

The windows were opened to let in a little fresh air, and then at once arose the withered arms, and again was heard the eternal "Miserabili, Eccellenza!"

Supper was brought in. First came a soup of water seasoned with pepper and rancid oil. This last also played chief part in the salad. Stale eggs and roasted cockscombs formed the most savoury dishes, and even the wine had a peculiar taste. It was, in fact, a genuine mixture.

At night the travellers' boxes were piled up against the door, and one of the party watched while the others slept. The lot fell upon our divinity student. Oh, how close that room was! The heat was overpowering. The mosquitoes buzzed and stung without mercy, and the "Miserabili" outside groaned and moaned even in their dreams.

"Yes, travelling would be very pleasant," sighed the student, "if one had no body, or if the body could rest while the spirit went free and unfettered. Wherever I go, I am tormented with a craving for something better than I can find; something enduring, something perfect. But what is it? and where is it to be found? And yet I do know what it is I desire: it is happiness—complete, lasting happiness!"

No sooner were these words spoken than he was again at home. Long white curtains hung before the windows, and on the floor in the middle of the room was a black coffin. There he lay, sleeping the quiet sleep of death. His wish was fulfilled; his body rested while his spirit wandered free and unencumbered by its earthly tabernacle. "Call no man happy till he is dead," were the words of wise Solon; and

here was a fresh proof of their truth. Every corpse is a sphinx, still propounding to man the same unanswerable riddle. And the sphinx there in the coffin might answer its own question in the words the living student had written two days before :—

O mighty Death, whose silence wakens dread,
Fain would we lift the veil that hides thy brow.
"Whither," we ask, "is the loved spirit fled ?
Our friend and brother, where does he dwell now ?"

In vain we ask. The thought that strove to scale,
Boldly aspiring, the cloud-hidden skies
Recoils in terror. Faith and knowledge fail,
And awe and darkness blind our straining eyes.

Yet dark-browed angel, welcome to our door.
Poor struggling human spirit, hail thy guest ;
Thy griefs, the world's unkindness vex no more
When Death's cold arms are clasped around thy breast.

Two figures were moving in the room. We know them both. They were the messenger of Fortune and the fairy Care. They were bending over the dead man.

"Do you see now," said Care, "what sort of happiness your goloshes have conferred on humanity ?"

"Surely," replied Pleasure, "they have bestowed a real blessing upon him who slumbers here, if on no other."

"Nay," answered Care, "his departure was his own choice, he did not wait for his summons. The eyes of his spirit had not yet been opened to discern those hidden treasures with which this world abounds ; he had not accomplished his destined task. I will confer on him a true benefit." And she took the goloshes off his feet.

Immediately the sleep of death was ended and the dead man arose with renewed life and vigour. Care vanished, and with her vanished the goloshes. Doubtless she considered they had been proved to be her rightful property.

THE TINDER-BOX

A SOLDIER came marching along the road: "Left, right! left, right!" He had his knapsack on his back and a sword by his side, for he had been to the wars, and was now returning home. On the road he met an old witch; a horrid-looking creature. Her under-lip hung down quite to her breast.

"Good-evening, soldier!" said she. "What a bright sword, and what a large knapsack you have! You're the right sort of soldier, and you shall have as much money as you can wish!"

"Thank you, old witch!" said the soldier.

"Do you see that large tree?" said she, pointing to a tree that stood by the wayside. "It is quite hollow. Climb up to the top, and you will find a hole large enough for you to creep through, and so let yourself down into the tree. I will tie a rope round your waist, so that I can pull you up again when you call me."

"But what am I to do down there in the tree?" asked the soldier.

"Why, fetch money, to be sure!" answered the witch. "As soon as you get to the bottom, you will find yourself in a large well-lighted hall, for more than three hundred lamps are burning there. Then you will see three doors which you can open easily, for the keys are in the locks. On opening the first door you will enter a room. In the middle of it, on the floor, stands a large chest with a dog seated on it whose eyes are as large as tea-cups. But don't trouble about him. I will lend you my blue checked apron, and you must spread it on the floor, and then go briskly up to the dog, and seize him, and set him down on it. When that is done, you can open the chest and take as many

pennies as you choose. That chest contains only copper coins. If you like silver better, you must go into the next room; and there you will find a dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels. Don't be afraid of him; you have only to set him down on my apron, and then rifle the chest at your leisure. But if you would rather have gold than either silver or copper, that is to be had too, and as much of it as you can carry, if you pass on into the third chamber. The dog that sits on this third money-chest is very terrible, and has eyes as big as a tower. But don't be afraid; if you set him down on my apron, he will do you no harm, and you can take as much gold from the chest as you like."

"That sounds all right," said the soldier. "But what am I to give you for all this, old woman? for of course you don't intend to tell me all this for nothing."

"Not a penny will I take," answered the witch. "I wish you only to bring me an old tinder-box which my grandmother left there by mistake the last time she was down in the tree."

"Well, then, give me the rope and I'll be gone," said the soldier.

"Here it is," said the witch, "and here is my blue checked apron."

So the soldier climbed the tree, let himself down through the hole in the trunk, and found himself in the wide hall lighted up by more than three hundred lamps, as the witch had said.

He opened the first door. Faugh! There sat the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups, staring at him as though in utter amazement.

"There's a good dog!" said the soldier, as he spread the witch's apron on the floor, and lifted the animal on to it. He then filled his pockets with the copper coins in the chest, shut the lid, put the dog back in his place, and passed on into the second room.

There, right enough, sat the dog with eyes as large as mill-wheels.

"You had really better not stare so," said the soldier. "Your eyes might start out of your head altogether, you

know." With that he lifted the dog and set it down on the witch's apron. But when he saw the vast quantity of silver there was in the chest, he threw his pence away in disgust, and filled his pockets and his knapsack with the silver. Then he passed on into the third chamber. The dog in this chamber actually had a pair of eyes each as large as a tower, and they kept rolling round and round in his head like wheels.

"Good-evening!" said the soldier, saluting respectfully, for such a dog as this he had never before seen or heard of. He stood still for a minute or two, looking at him; then thinking, "The sooner it's done the better!" he took hold of the immense creature, removed him from the chest to the floor, and raised the lid of the chest. Oh, what a heap of gold was there! enough to buy all the cakes and sugar-plums, all the tin soldiers, whips, and rocking-horses in the world, and to buy the whole town as well. Hastily the soldier threw away all the silver money he had stuffed into his pockets and knapsack, and filled not only them, but even his cap and boots with gold. He could hardly walk for the weight he carried. He lifted the dog on to the chest again, banged the door of the room behind him, and called up the tree: "Halloo, you old witch! pull me up!"

"Have you got the tinder-box?" asked the witch.

"Upon my honour, I'd quite forgotten it!" shouted the soldier, and back he went to fetch it. The witch then drew him up, and now he stood again in the highroad, with his pockets, boots, knapsack, and cap stuffed with gold pieces.

"What are you going to do with the tinder-box?" asked the soldier.

"That's no business of yours," said the witch. "You've got your money: give me my tinder-box!"

"Well, take your choice!" said the soldier. "Tell me this instant what you want with the tinder-box, or I'll cut off your head."

"I won't tell you!" screamed the witch.

So the soldier drew his sword and cut off her head.

Then he made haste to tie all his money securely in her blue apron, slung it across his back, put the tinder-box into his pocket, and went on to the nearest town.

It was a large, handsome city. He walked into the first hotel in the place, called for the best rooms, and ordered the choicest dishes for his supper, for he was now a rich man, with plenty of gold to spend.

The man who cleaned his boots thought them too old and shabby for such a grand gentleman; but next day the soldier provided himself with new boots, and very gay clothes besides. Our soldier was now a fine gentleman, and the people came to visit him and gave him information about all the places of amusement in the city, and about their King, and the beautiful Princess, his daughter.

"I should rather like to see her," said the soldier.

"No one can see her at all," was the reply. "She lives in a great brazen castle, with ever so many walls and towers round it. No one but the King may go and visit her there, because it has been foretold that she will marry a common soldier, and our King cannot bear to think of that."

"I should very much like to see her, though, just for once!" thought the soldier; but he could not get permission to do so.

And now he lived a gay life; went constantly to theatres, drove in the royal parks and gardens, and gave much money to the poor. He knew of old what a wretched thing it was not to have a shilling in one's pocket. He was always gaily dressed, and had a crowd of friends, who, one and all, declared he was a capital fellow, a real gentleman; and that pleased our soldier very much. But, as he kept on giving and spending every day, and never received anything in return, his money began to run done; and at last he had only a couple of shillings left, and was forced to exchange his beautiful rooms for an attic, where he had to brush his own boots, and darn his own clothes, and where none of his friends ever came to see him, because there were so many stairs to go up, that it was too fatiguing.

It was a very dark night, and he could not afford to buy himself even a rush-light; then all at once he remembered

that there was a bit of candle in the tinder-box that the old witch had bade him fetch out of the hollow tree. So he brought out the tinder-box and began to strike a light. But no sooner had he struck a few sparks from the flint with the steel, than the door burst open, and the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups; the one he had seen in the cavern beneath the tree, stood before him and said, "What commands has my master for his slave?"

"What's this?" cried the soldier. "This is a splendid sort of tinder-box, if it will furnish me with whatever I want. Fetch me some money," said he to the dog. The creature vanished, and in half a minute was back again, with a large bag of coppers in his mouth.

Soon the soldier began to understand the rare virtues of this charming tinder-box. If he struck the flint only once, the dog that sat on the chest full of copper came to him; if he struck it twice, the dog that watched over the silver; and if he struck it three times, the dog with eyes like towers who kept guard over the gold.

The soldier had now plenty of money. He went back to his fine rooms, and dressed himself in fine clothes, so that all his friends knew him again, and thought as highly of him as ever.

One day he thought how ridiculous it was that no one should be allowed to see the Princess. Every one said she was so very beautiful that it was a shame she should be shut up in that great brazen castle surrounded by high walls. "I do so want to see her if it could be managed," thought he; "but where's my tinder-box?" He struck the flint, and the dog with eyes as large as tea-cups stood before him.

"It is rather late, I know," began the soldier; "but I do wish to see the Princess so much, if only for a moment!"

The dog was out of the door, and, before the soldier could even look round, he was back again with the Princess sitting asleep on his back. She was so beautiful, so wonderfully beautiful, that every one who saw her knew her at once for a real princess.

The soldier could not help himself; like a true soldier he

knelt and kissed her hand. Then the dog ran back to the palace with the Princess that very minute.

Next morning, while at breakfast with the King and Queen, the Princess told what a strange dream she had had of riding on a large dog, and of a soldier who had knelt and kissed her hand.

"A pretty sort of dream indeed!" said the Queen. And she made one of the old ladies of the court watch by the Princess's bedside next night, to find out whether it was really a dream or what was the meaning of it.

Next evening the soldier longed very much to see the Princess again, so he sent the dog to fetch her. Off he went, and ran as fast as before, but not so fast but that the old lady watching by the couch was able to follow. She put on goloshes and ran behind them, and saw the dog carry the Princess into a large house. Then, thinking to herself, "Now I know what to do," she took out a piece of chalk and made a great white cross on the door. Then she went home to bed and the dog carried back the Princess. But when the dog saw that a cross had been put on the door of the house where the soldier lived, he took another piece of chalk and set crosses on every door throughout the town.

Early next morning the King and Queen came with the old court dame, and all the officers of the royal household, to see where the Princess had been. "Here it is!" said the King, when he came to the first street-door with a cross chalked on it. "My dear," cried the Queen, "where are your eyes?—this must be the house," pointing to a second door with a cross. "No, this is it surely—— Why, here's a cross too!" cried all of them together, on discovering that there were crosses on all the doors.

It was evident that their search would be in vain, and they gave it up.

But the Queen was a very wise and clever woman who could do other things besides ride in a carriage. So she took her gold scissors, cut a large piece of silk into strips, and sewed these together, to make a pretty little bag. This bag she filled with the finest white flour, tied it to the Princess's waist, and then she cut a little hole in the bag, just large

enough to let the flour drop out all the time the Princess was moving.

That evening the dog came again, took the Princess on his back, and ran away with her to the soldier, who now loved her very much, and wished himself a prince so that he might marry her. The dog did not notice how the flour went drip, drip, dripping, all the way from the palace to the soldier's house, and from the soldier's house back to the palace. So next morning the King and Queen easily found where their daughter had been carried, and they took the soldier and cast him into prison.

And there he had to stay. Oh! how dark it was, and how dreary! and the keeper kept coming in to remind him that he was to be hanged on the morrow. This piece of news was by no means agreeable; and besides, the tinder-box had been left in his rooms at the hotel.

When morning came, he could see through his narrow iron grating, all the people hurrying out of the town to see him hanged. He could hear the drums beating, and presently, too, he saw the soldiers marching to the place of execution. What a crowd there was rushing by! Among the rest was a shoemaker's apprentice; he was running with such speed that one of his slippers flew off and struck the bars of the soldier's prison window.

"Stop, stop, little 'prentice!" cried the soldier; "it's of no use to be in such a hurry. The fun will not begin till I come; but if you'll run to my lodgings and fetch me my tinder-box, I'll give you a shilling. But you must run for your life." The boy liked the idea of earning a shilling, so away he raced and brought the tinder-box to the soldier. And then—well; now we shall hear what happened then!

Outside the city a gibbet had been built; round it stood the soldiers, and many thousands of people. The King and Queen sat on magnificent thrones, and opposite there sat judges and the whole council.

The soldier was brought out. He already stood on the ladder and the executioner was on the point of putting the rope round his neck, when, turning to their Majesties, he said that the last harmless request of a poor wretch was

always granted, and begged them to let him smoke a pipe of tobacco; it would be the last he should ever smoke in the world.

The King could not refuse this harmless request, so the soldier took out his tinder-box and struck the flint—once he struck it, twice he struck it, three times he struck it; and in an instant the three wizard dogs stood there,—the one with eyes as big as tea-cups, the one with eyes as big as mill-wheels, and the third with eyes like towers.

"Now, help me; don't let me be hanged," cried the soldier. And the three terrible dogs fell upon the judges and councillors, tossing them high into the air—so high that in falling again they were broken in pieces.

"We will not——" began the King. But the monster dog with eyes as large as towers did not wait to hear what His Majesty would not. He seized both him and the Queen, and flung them up into the air after the councillors. And the soldiers and all the people were frightened, and shouted out with one voice: "Good soldier, you shall be our King, and the beautiful Princess shall be your wife and our Queen!"

So the soldier was taken to the palace, and the Princess was made Queen, which she liked much better than living as a prisoner in the brazen castle.

THE OLD STREET LAMP

HAVE you ever heard the story of the old street lamp? Perhaps it is not very amusing, but for all that you may as well listen to it.

A respectable old street lamp, that for many, many years had done good service, was about to be retired on a pension. For the very last evening she sat on the lamp-post, giving light to the street, and she felt very much as an old dancer at the theatre feels when she is dancing for the last time, and knows that to-morrow, and ever after, she will sit alone in her attic, unthought of and uncared for. She looked forward to the coming day with dread, for she knew that she would then be taken, for the first time in her life, into the council-room, to be examined by the mayor and the council, that they might decide whether she were any longer fit for service. Then, too, it would be determined whether she should be sent out to one of the suburbs to give light to the people who lived there, or into the country, or to one of the manufactories, or whether she should be sent at once to an iron foundry, to be melted down and made into something new. And this troubled her very much, for she feared that if she were made into something new she would forget that she had ever been a street lamp. Besides, whatever became of her, she was sure to be separated from the night watchman and his wife, whom she had known so long that she had learnt to consider herself quite one of their family. The night watchman had been made a watchman just at the time she was made a lamp; he was an active young man then. Yes, a good many years had passed since she became a street lamp and he a watchman. His wife was rather proud in those days; only when she passed the street lamp of an evening did she deign to throw a glance up at

her—never by day. Now, on the contrary, when all three, watchman, wife, and lamp, had grown old, the wife had become more friendly, and had often cleaned out the lamp and given her fresh oil. This man and wife were thoroughly honest folk, they had never cheated the lamp of a single drop of oil that was due.

It was her last night in the street, and to-morrow she must go into the council-room: these were two gloomy thoughts for the lamp. No wonder she did not burn brightly. Other thoughts besides these passed through her mind. She had shone on so many things, she had seen so much, perhaps as much as the mayor and corporation themselves. She did not say so aloud, for she was really a modest old lamp, and would on no account have given offence to any one, least of all to her superiors. She remembered so many things; and as some of these recollections passed through her mind, her flame would suddenly blaze up as though she were thinking—"Yes, and there are a few, too, who will remember me. There was, for instance, that handsome young man—ah! it is many years ago now—who came with a letter in his hand. It was written on rose-coloured paper, so pretty, so delicate, and with gilt edges, and it was in a lady's handwriting. He read the letter twice over, and then kissed it, and looked up at me with eyes that said plainly, 'I am the happiest man in the world!' None but him and me knew what was written in that first letter from his betrothed. And I remember, too, seeing another pair of eyes; it is strange how thought jumps from one thing to another. A splendid funeral was passing through the street, and such a beautiful young lady lay on a bier covered with wreaths of flowers, and there were so many bright torches that my light was quite dimmed by them. A great crowd followed in procession, but after they had all passed by, and the torches were out of sight, and I looked around me, I saw some one standing by the post weeping. Never shall I forget those two sorrowful eyes that then glanced up at me!" These and thoughts like these passed through the mind of the old street lamp on this her last evening of public service. The sentinel, when he is relieved, at least

knows his successor, and can whisper to him a few words of useful information; but the lamp knew nothing of hers, and could not, as she might have done, give him one or two useful hints about the rain and the fog, or show how far the moonlight was wont to spread over the pavement, or from what side the wind blew.

On the gutter-board stood three persons, each anxious for the old lamp's place. They had presented themselves to her, under the idea that she would have to appoint her own successor. The first was a herring's head, which, you know, can shine in the dark, and was of opinion that his being raised on the lamp-post would be a great saving of oil. The second was a piece of rotten wood, which also shone in the dark; and considered itself sprung from a tree that had once been the glory and pride of the forest. The third candidate was a glow-worm. How she had got there the lamp could not make out; but there she was, and she shone very prettily. Nevertheless the herring's head and the piece of rotten wood were both ready to take their oaths that she could only shine at certain times, and was therefore quite out of the running.

The old lamp explained that none of them gave enough light to be fit to take her place, but this none of the three would believe; and so, when they heard that it was not for the lamp to choose her own successor, they said that they were very glad of it, for that she was too old and infirm to be able to choose properly.

Just then the wind came rushing round the corner of the street; he blew through the smoke-cowl upon the old lantern, exclaiming, "What is this I hear? That you will really leave us to-morrow? Is this truly the last evening that I shall meet you here? Well, if it must be so, I will make you a parting gift. I will blow into your brain-pan, so that not only shall you remember clearly whatever you have seen and heard, but whenever anything is told or read aloud in your presence, you shall be so clear-headed as to see it in a picture!"

"Ah, that is a valuable gift indeed!" replied the old street lamp. "Many thanks!—if only I am not melted down!"

"We must hope that will not happen," said the wind. "And now I blow this faculty into you; if you can get many such gifts, you may still enjoy a comfortable old age."

"If only I am not melted down!" sighed the lamp. "Or can you, even in that case, make me able to retain my memory?"

"Old lamp, do be reasonable!" said the wind; and again he blew. And now the moon stepped forth from the clouds. "What will you give the old lamp?" asked the wind.

"I can give nothing at all!" was her reply. "I am now on the wane, and lamps have never shone for me, long as I have shone for lamps." And the moon hid herself again behind the clouds, for she was determined not to be plagued into giving anything.

Just then a drop from the roof of the house fell down upon the cover of the lamp. It declared, however, that it came from the grey clouds, and was sent as a gift, perhaps the very best gift of all. "I shall sink into you so as to enable you in one night, if you wish it, to become rusty, and fall to pieces and return to dust." But to the lamp this seemed a poor gift, and so it seemed also to the wind. "Has no one a better gift, has no one a better to offer?" whistled he as loud as he could, and just at that moment a bright shooting star fell, leaving behind it a long trail of fire.

"What was that?" cried the herring's head. "Was that not a shooting star? I verily believe it went right into the lamp! Well, to be sure, if the office is sought by people of such very high station as that, we had better give up the idea of it and go home!"—and so they did all three. But the lamp suddenly flared up high and bright! "That was a charming gift!" said she. "The beautiful stars have always delighted me, and have shone more brightly than I ever could, though it has been the aim of my life to do so. And now they have taken notice of the poor old lamp, and have sent one down to me with a rare gift, so that in future all that I can myself remember and see so plainly shall also be seen by those whom I love!—a precious

gift' indeed, for joy that we cannot share with others is only half enjoyed."

"The sentiment does you honour!" said the wind. "It seems, though, that you do not know that unless a wax-taper is lighted inside you, no one will be able to see any pictures through your means. But the stars never thought of that; they suppose that everything that shines here below is a wax taper," added the wind. "But I must go down now." And so he lay down to rest.

Next day—but we may as well pass over the next day. Next night the lamp lay in an arm-chair—and guess where! In the old watchman's room! He had begged the mayor and corporation, in consideration of his long and faithful services, to be allowed as a favour to keep the old lamp which he himself had put up and lit four-and-twenty years ago, on the first day of his service as watchman. He looked on it almost as his own child; he had no children, so the lamp was given to him. And there she now lay in the arm-chair, close by the warm stove, and she seemed to have grown so much larger as nearly to fill the great arm-chair. And the old people were sitting at supper; and every now and then they threw a kind, friendly glance at the old lamp, as though they would gladly have given her a place at the table. Their room was properly a cellar, two yards deep in the earth, and to reach it you had to go along a stone passage; but it was warm and comfortable inside, and very clean and neat. The door was bound round with list; there were curtains to the bedstead and the little windows; and on the window-ledges stood two strange-looking flower-pots! Neighbour Christian, the sailor, had brought them home from the East or West Indies. They were two earthenware elephants, without backs, and hollow inside; and out of the mould with which they were filled sprang up from one of them the most delicate young leeks—that was their kitchen-garden; from the other a large geranium full of blossoms—that was their flower-garden. On the wall hung a large coloured print of "The Congress at Vienna." A clock, with heavy leaden weights, kept up an incessant "tick, tick." It always went

too fast, but that was better than going too slow; at least so said the old folks. They ate their supper, and the old lamp, as before said, lay in the arm-chair close by the warm stove. It seemed to her as if the world had turned topsy-turvy. But when the old watchman looked at her, and began to talk of what they two had gone through together, in rain and in mist, in the brief summer nights, and in the long winter darkness when the snowflakes whirled so thickly about them, that he longed to get back to the shelter of his cellar-home, then all was right again with the old lamp, for she saw all he spoke of, and she knew that the wind had not deceived her.

They were so brisk and busy, these old people; not a single hour of theirs was ever dozed or dawdled away. On Sunday afternoons some book or other was always brought out, generally a book of travels, and the old man would read aloud about Africa, about its vast forests and the wild elephants that roamed through them; and the old woman would listen eagerly, and cast a look from time to time at the earthenware elephants that served her as flower-pots. "Yes, I can almost picture that to myself!" she would say. And the lamp wished with all her heart that a wax-candle were lighted and put inside her, for then the good old woman would actually see the whole scene pictured visibly before her, just as the lamp saw it—the tall trees with their thickly intertwined branches, the naked black men on horseback, whole herds of elephants, and reeds and under-wood breaking and crackling under their broad feet.

"What is the use of all my rare gifts when no wax-candle is lit within me?" sighed the lamp. "They have nothing here but train-oil and tallow candles, and neither of those will do."

One day a number of wax-candle-ends were brought into the cellar. The larger pieces were burnt out in the candle-stick, and the smaller ones the old woman used to wax her thread with when she was at work. This was worse than ever! Here were wax-candles in plenty, and no one ever thought of putting one little piece into the lamp.

"So here I stand with all my rare gifts!" thought the

lamp. "I see many charming pictures pass before me, but I may never share the enjoyment with you, my friends! You do not know that I can change these bare white walls to the richest tapestry, to glorious leafy woods, to everything, in fact, that you can desire to see."

The lamp was continually being rubbed clean, and in the corner where it stood it was so placed that every one's eye fell upon it; people, truly enough, called it a piece of old rubbish, but the old couple cared nothing for that; they loved it.

One day—it was the old watchman's birthday—his wife came up to the lamp, saying to herself with a smile, "I will get up a little illumination in his honour," and the lamp's iron hat cracked, for she thought, "Now, then, I shall have a wax-candle!" But oil, not wax, was given her; she burnt all the evening long, and she now felt sure that the gift the stars had given her, the best gift of all, must needs remain a hidden treasure, as far as this present life was concerned. Then she dreamt—for a lamp so highly gifted as she was must surely be able to dream!—she dreamt that the old people were dead, and that she herself had been carried to an iron foundry to be melted down. Very much frightened was she, as frightened as when she was taken into the council-room to be examined by the mayor and the council. She knew she had the power of becoming rust and dust if she chose, but yet she did not choose it. And so it came to pass that she was cast into the furnace, and became a most beautiful little iron candlestick, intended to hold wax-tapers, and wax-tapers only; it was in the form of an angel holding a bouquet of flowers, and in the centre of the bouquet the wax-candle was placed, and the candlestick itself was set on a green writing-desk. And the room around it was a pretty room; books were scattered about, and beautiful pictures hung upon the walls: it was a poet's room, and all that he imagined and wrote about seemed whirling round, the chamber becoming now a deep, gloomy forest—now a sunlit plain, with scattered hamlets, the stork striding about on his long legs—now a stately ship, tossing high on the waves of the heaving ocean! "Oh, what rare gifts are mine!"

thought the lamp, when she awoke. "Almost could I long to be melted down!—but no, that must not be while the old folks live. They love me for my own sake; I am like their child to them, and they have rubbed me clean and given me fresh oil for so many years. I ought certainly to be contented with my lot!" And from that time she had more inward peace

THE LITTLE MATCH-GIRL

It was bitterly cold, snowing fast, and almost dark; the evening—the last of the old year—was drawing in. In the cold and darkness a poor little girl, with bare head and feet, was still wandering about the streets. When she left her home she had slippers on, but they were not of much use. They belonged to her mother, and had dropped off the child's feet whilst she was running fast across the road, to get out of the way of two carriages. One of the slippers was not to be found; the other had been snatched up by a street boy, who ran off with it.

So the little girl walked on, her bare feet quite red and blue with the cold. In her tattered apron she carried a bundle of matches, and there were a good many more in her hand. No one had bought any of them the livelong day—no one had given her a single penny. Trembling with cold and hunger, she crept on, the picture of sorrow.

The snowflakes settled on her long, fair hair, which fell in ringlets over her shoulders; but she thought neither of her own beauty, nor of the cold. Lights shone from every window, and the smell of roast goose reached her, for it was New Year's eve, and it was of that she thought.

In a corner formed by two houses, one of which came a little farther forward than the other, she sat down, drawing her little feet close under her, but in vain—she could not warm them. She dared not go home—she had sold no matches, earned not a single penny, and her father would certainly beat her; besides, her home was almost as cold as the street—it was an attic; and, although the larger of the many holes in the roof were stopped up with straw and rags, the cold wind came whistling through. Her hands were nearly frozen. A match from her bundle would warm them,

perhaps, if she dared light it. She drew one out, and struck it against the wall. It was a bright, warm light like a little candle, and she held her hands over it. It was quite a wonderful light. It seemed to that poor little girl as though she were sitting before a large iron stove with polished brass feet and brass ornaments. So beautifully did the fire within burn that the child stretched out her feet to warm them also. Alas! in an instant the flame had died away, the stove vanished, and the little girl sat cold and comfortless, with the remains of the burnt match in her hand.

A second match was struck against the wall; it kindled and blazed, and wherever its light fell the wall became transparent as a veil, and the little girl could see into the room. She saw the table spread with a snowy-white tablecloth and set with shining china dinner dishes. A roast goose stuffed with apples and dried plums stood at one end, smoking hot, and—which was pleasantest of all to see—the goose with knife and fork still in her breast, jumped down from the dish, and waddled along the floor right up to the poor child. The match was burnt out, and only the thick, hard wall was beside her.

She lighted a third match. Again the flame shot up, and now she was sitting under a most beautiful Christmas-tree, far larger, and far more prettily decked out than the one she had seen last Christmas-eve through the glass doors of the rich merchant's house. Thousands of wax-tapers lighted up the green branches, and tiny painted figures, such as she had seen in the shop windows, looked down from the tree upon her. The child stretched out her hands towards them and the match went out. Still, however, the Christmas candles burned higher and higher, till they looked to her like the stars in the sky. One of them fell, the light streaming behind it like a long, fiery tail.

"Now some one is dying," said the little girl softly, for she had been told by her old grandmother, the only person who had ever been kind to her—but she was now dead,—that whenever a star falls a soul flies up to God. She struck another match against the wall and the light shone

round her, and in its brightness she saw her dear dead grandmother, gentle and loving as always, but bright and happy as she had never looked during her lifetime.

"Grandmother!" said the child, "oh; take me with you! I know you will leave me as soon as the match goes out—you will vanish like the warm stove, like the New Year's feast, and like the beautiful Christmas-tree." And she hastily lighted all the remaining matches in the bundle, lest her grandmother should disappear. And the matches burned with such a blaze of splendour, that noon-day could scarcely have been brighter. Never had the good old grandmother looked so tall and stately, so beautiful and kind. She took the little girl in her arms, and they both flew away together radiant with happiness. They flew far above the earth, higher and higher, till they were in that place where neither cold, nor hunger, nor pain is ever known,—in the presence of God.

But in the cold morning hour, crouching in the corner of the wall, the poor little girl was found—her cheeks glowing, her lips smiling—frozen to death on the last night of the Old Year. The New Year's sun shone on the lifeless child; motionless she sat there with the matches in her lap, one bundle of them quite burnt out.

"She has been trying to warm herself, poor thing!" some people said; but no one knew of the sweet visions she had beheld, or how gloriously she and her grandmother were celebrating their New Year's festival.

THE FLYING TRUNK

THERE was once a merchant who was so rich that he could have paved the whole street with pieces of silver and, perhaps, an alley besides. But he did not do so; he knew another way of using his money. Such a good trader was he that whenever he laid out a shilling he gained a crown in return—till he died.

All his money went to his son, and he lived merrily, went to a masquerade every evening, made bank-notes into paper kites, and played at ducks and drakes in the pond with gold pieces instead of stones. In this manner he soon spent all his money. At last he had nothing but four shillings left, and no other clothes but a pair of slippers and an old dressing-gown. His friends cared no more about him, now that they could no longer walk abroad with him. One of them, however, more good-natured than the rest, sent him an old trunk, with this advice, "Pack up, and be off!" This was all very fine; but he had nothing to pack up, so he himself got into the trunk.

It was a wonderful trunk. When the lock was pressed, it could fly. He did press the lock, and lo! up flew the trunk with him through the chimney, high into the clouds, on and on, higher and higher. Whenever the trunk creaked he was in a terrible fright, for if it had broken in two he would have made a tremendous somersault.

Only fancy it! in such manner he came to the country of the Turks. There he hid the trunk under a heap of dry leaves in a wood, and walked into the next town; and there he found that everybody was clad as he was in dressing-gown and slippers. He met a nurse carrying a little child in her arms. "Pardon me, Turkish nurse," said he, "can



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'GRANDMOTHER! OH, TAKE ME WITH YOU!'

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you tell me what that great castle is close to the town, the castle where the windows are so high up?"

"The Sultan's daughter dwells there," replied the nurse; "it has been prophesied of her that she shall be made very unhappy by a lover, and therefore no one may visit her, except when the Sultan and Sultana are with her."

"Thank you," said the merchant's son, and he went back into the wood, sat down in his trunk, flew up to the roof of the palace, and crept through the window into the Princess's room.

She was lying asleep on the sofa, and she was so lovely that the merchant's son could not help kissing her. At this she awoke, and was dreadfully frightened till her visitor told her that he was the Turkish prophet, and had come down from the sky to see her, and this pleased her greatly. They sat down side by side, and he talked to her about her eyes, calling them beautiful dark-blue seas where thoughts and feelings floated like mermaids; and he spoke of her brow as a fair snowy mountain. And many other such things he said to her, and when he proposed to her she at once said "Yes."

"But you must come here on Saturday," said she; "the Sultan and Sultana are to drink tea with me that evening. They will be very proud when they hear that I am to marry the Turkish prophet! And you must tell them a very pretty story, for they are fond of stories; my mother likes them to be rather high-flown and with a moral; father likes them to be funny, so as to make him laugh."

"Very well, then; I shall bring you no other wedding present than a story," replied the merchant's son.

Then they parted, but not before the Princess had given him a sabre all covered with gold. He knew right well what use to make of this present.

So he flew away, bought a new dressing-gown, and then sat down in the wood to make up the story which was to be ready by Saturday.

At last he was ready, and at last Saturday came.

The Sultan and the Sultana, and the whole court were at tea with the Princess, and received him with much ceremony.

"Will you not tell us a story?" asked the Queen; "a story that is instructive and full of deep meaning."

"But let it make us laugh," said the King.

"With pleasure," replied the merchant's son. And this is what he told them:—

There was once a bundle of matches that were extremely proud of their high descent. They traced their family to the tall fir-tree of which each of them was a splinter, and which had been a tree of great age and size in the wood. The matches were now lying on the mantelpiece, between a tinder-box and an old iron saucepan, and to these two they often talked about their youth. "Ah, when we were upon the green branches," said they; "when we really lived upon green branches—that was a happy time! Every morning and evening we had diamond tea—that is dew; the whole day long we had sunshine, at least whenever the sun shone; and all the little birds used to tell us stories. It might easily be seen, too, that we were rich, for the other trees were clothed with leaves only during the summer, whereas our family wore green clothes both summer and winter. At last came the wood-cutter—what a revolution that was!—and our family was broken up. The head of the family got a situation as mainmast to a magnificent ship, and can sail round the world when he will; the other branches of our family were scattered in different directions, and to us was given the task of enlightening the common people. Now you will understand how it comes to pass that persons of our class are living in a kitchen."

"Mine has been a very different history," said the iron saucepan, near which the matches were lying. "From the moment I came into the world, I have been rubbed and scrubbed, and boiled over and over again. I love to have to do with what is solidly good, and am really of the first importance in this house. My chief pleasure is to stand clean and bright upon this mantelpiece after dinner and to have some sensible talk with my companions. But except the water-pail, who now and then goes out into the court, we all of us lead a very quiet life here. Our only newsmonger is the market-basket, but he talks in such an alarming way about

'government' and the 'people'—why, not long ago, there was an old jar standing here who was so much shocked by what he heard, that he fell down and broke to pieces. That market-basket is a Liberal, that's the fact."

"Now, you talk too much," broke in the tinder-box, and the steel struck the flint, so that the sparks flew out. "Why should we not spend a pleasant evening?"

"Yes, let us settle who is of highest rank among us!" proposed the matches.

"Oh no; for my part, I would rather not speak of myself," said the saucepan; "let us have some other kind of amusement. I will begin. Let us tell something that has happened to ourselves. It will be easy to throw ourselves into that, and very interesting. Near the Baltic, among the Danish beech-groves——"

"That is a capital beginning!" cried all the plates at once; "it will certainly be just the sort of story for us!"

"Yes, there I spent my youth in a very quiet family; the furniture was rubbed, the floors were washed, clean curtains were hung up every fortnight."

"What a charming way you have of describing things!" said the carpet-broom. "Any one might guess at once that it is some one who has been much in the company of ladies who is speaking; such a pure tone runs through the story."

"Very true; one feels that!" cried the water-pail, and he gave a little leap of joy, so that some of the water splashed upon the floor.

And the saucepan went on with his tale, and the end was just as good as the beginning.

All the plates clattered applause, and the carpet-broom took some green parsley out of the sand-hole and crowned the saucepan, for she knew that this would vex the others; and she thought, "If I crown him to-day, he will crown me to-morrow."

"Now I will dance," said the tongs, and accordingly she did dance, and oh! it was wonderful to see how she spun round on one leg; the old chair-cover in the corner split

with surprise at the sight. "Am I not to be crowned too?" asked the tongs, and she was crowned.

"These are the vulgar rabble!" thought the matches.

The tea-urn was now called upon to sing; but she said she had a cold, and could only sing when she was boiling, which, of course, was all pride and affectation. The fact was she never cared to sing except when she was standing on the parlour-table before company.

In the window lay an old quill with which the maids used to write. There was nothing remarkable about her, except that she had been dipped too deep in the ink; but she was proud of that. "If the tea-urn does not choose to sing," said she, "she may let it alone; there is a nightingale in a cage outside that can sing. To be sure he has never learnt the notes—but we will not speak evil of any one this evening!"

"I think it highly improper," said the tea-kettle, who was the vocalist of the kitchen, and a half-brother of the tea-urn's, "that a foreign bird should be listened to. Is it patriotic? I appeal to the market-basket."

"I am vexed," said the market-basket, "I am inwardly, vexed more than any one can think. Is this a becoming way of spending the evening? Would it not be much more sensible to put the house in order? Then every one would get into his right place. What do you say? I would lead the game. That would be something worth the doing!"

"Well, then, let us set about it at once!" cried they all. Just then the door opened—it was the servant-maid. They all stood still, not one dared stir, yet there was not a single pot there but was thinking about the great things he could have done, and how great was his superiority over the others.

"Ah, if I had chosen it," thought each of them, "what a merry evening we might have had!"

The maid took the matches and struck a light—oh, how they sputtered and blazed up!

"Now every one may see," thought they, "that we are of highest rank; what a splendid light we give!" And while they were speaking they were burnt out.

"That is a capital story," said the Sultana; "I feel quite as if I were in the kitchen listening to the matches. Yes, you shall have our daughter!"

"With all my heart," said the Sultan; "on Monday you shall marry our daughter," and from that moment they treated the young man as one of the family.

On the evening before the wedding the whole city was illuminated; cakes, buns, and sugar-plums were thrown out among the people; all the little boys in the streets stood upon tiptoe, shouting "Hurrah!" and whistling through their fingers. Altogether it was a splendid affair.

"Well, I suppose I ought to do my part too," thought the merchant's son. So he went and bought sky-rockets, squibs, Catherine-wheels, Roman-candles, and all kinds of fireworks conceivable, put them all into his trunk, and flew up into the air, letting them off as he flew.

All the Turks jumped up to look, so hastily that their slippers flew about their ears. Such a meteor they had never seen before. Now they might be sure that it was indeed the prophet who was to marry their Princess.

As soon as the merchant's son had returned in his trunk to the wood, he said to himself, "I will go into the city and hear what people say about me, and what sort of figure they think I made in the air." It was quite natural that he should wish to know.

Oh, what strange accounts were given! Every one whom he spoke to had beheld the bright vision in a way of his own, but all agreed that it was a very beautiful sight.

"I saw the great prophet with my own eyes," declared one. "He had eyes like sparkling stars, and a beard like foaming water."

"He flew away in a mantle of fire," said another, "and the prettiest little cherubs were peeping forth from under its folds."

He heard many other wonderful things about himself; and next day was to be his wedding-day.

He now went back to the wood, intending to get into his trunk again, but, alas! the trunk was burnt. One spark from the fireworks had been left in it, and had set it on fire;

the trunk now lay in ashes. The poor merchant's son could never fly again—could never again visit his bride.

She sat the live-long day upon the roof of her palace expecting him ; she expects him still. He, meantime, goes about the world telling stories, but none of his stories now are so pleasant as that one which he told in the Princess's palace about the Brimstone Matches.

THE SNOW QUEEN

THE MIRROR AND ITS FRAGMENTS

ATTEND! We are now beginning. When we get to the end of the story we shall know more than we do now. Once, then, there was a very wicked magician. He was one of the most wicked of all, a real demon. Great was his delight at having made a mirror having the power to cause everything good and beautiful reflected in it to shrink up almost to nothing, whilst ugly and useless things were made to appear ten times larger and worse than they were. The loveliest landscapes looked in this mirror like boiled spinach; and the handsomest persons became hideous, and looked as if they stood on their heads and had no bodies, and their features so distorted that their friends could never have recognised them. Moreover, if one of them had a freckle, it seemed to spread over the nose and mouth; and if a good or pious thought passed through his mind, a wrinkle was seen in the mirror. The magician thought all this very amusing, and chuckled with delight at his own clever invention. Those who went to the school of magic where he taught, spread its fame abroad, and declared that now for the first time the world and its inhabitants might be seen as they really were. They carried the mirror everywhere, till at last there was no country nor person that had not been looked at through the mirror. They wished even to fly up to the sky with it to see the angels in the mirror; but the higher they flew the more slippery did the glass become. They could scarcely hold it. They flew on and on, higher and higher, till at last the mirror shivered so fearfully that it slipped from their hands and fell to the earth, breaking into millions, billions, and

trillions of pieces. And then it caused far greater unhappiness than before, for fragments of it scarcely as large as a grain of sand flew about in the air, and sometimes got into people's eyes, making them view everything the wrong way, or have eyes only for the worst side of what they looked at; for each little fragment had just the same effect as the entire mirror. Some people were so unfortunate as to receive a little splinter into their hearts—that was terrible! The heart became cold and hard, like a lump of ice. Some pieces were large enough to be used as window-panes, but it was of no use to look at one's friends through such panes as those. Other fragments were made into spectacles, and then what trouble people had with setting and re-setting them!

The wicked magician was greatly amused with all this, and he laughed till his sides ached.

There are still some little splinters of this mirror flying about in the air. We shall hear more about them very soon.

A LITTLE BOY AND A LITTLE GIRL

In a large town where there are so many houses and people that there is not room enough for every one to have even a little garden, and where many have to be content with a few plants in pots, there dwelt two poor children, whose garden was somewhat larger than a flower-pot. They were not brother and sister, but they loved each other as much as if they had been, and their parents lived in two attics which were exactly opposite each other. The roof of one house nearly joined the other, the gutter ran along between, and there was in each roof a little window, so that you could stride across the gutter from one window to the other. The parents of these children had each a large wooden box in which grew herbs for kitchen use, and they had placed these boxes upon the gutter, so near that they almost touched each other. A beautiful little rose-tree grew in each box; scarlet-runners clustered over the boxes, and the rose-bushes threw out long shoots that were trained round the windows; the whole looked almost like a

triumphal arch of leaves and flowers. The boxes were very high, and the children knew that they might not climb over them; but they often got leave to sit on their little stools, under the rose-trees, and thus they passed many a delightful hour.

In winter there was an end to these pleasures. The windows were often quite frozen over, and then they heated pennies on the stove, held the warm copper against the frozen pane, and thus made a little round peep-hole through which they could see each other.

The little boy was called Kay; the little girl's name was Gerda. In summer they could be together with one jump from the window; but in winter there were stairs to run down and stairs to run up, and sometimes there was wind and snow out of doors.

"Those are the white bees swarming there!" said Kay's old grandmother one day when it was snowing.

"Have they a Queen bee?" asked the little boy, for he knew that the real bees have one.

"They have," said the grandmother. "She flies yonder where they swarm so thickly; she is the largest of them, and never remains upon the earth, but flies up again into the black cloud. Often at midnight she flies through the streets of the town, and looks in at the windows, and then they are covered with strange and beautiful forms like trees and flowers."

"Yes, I have seen them!" said both the children. They knew that this was true.

"Can the Snow Queen come in here?" asked the little girl.

"If she do come in," said the boy, "I will put her on the warm stove, and then she will melt."

And the grandmother stroked his hair and told him stories.

One evening when little Kay was at home and half undressed, he crept upon the chair by the window and peeped through the little hole. Just then a few snowflakes fell, and one, the largest of them, remained lying on the edge of one of the flower-boxes. This snowflake grew larger and larger, till at last it took the form of a lady dressed

in the finest white crape, which looked like millions of star-like snowflakes joined together. She was wonderfully fair and beautiful, but made entirely of ice, glittering, dazzling ice. She was alone and her eyes sparkled like two bright stars, but there was no rest or repose in them. She nodded at the window, and beckoned with her hand. The little boy was frightened and jumped down from the chair; and at that moment he seemed to see a large bird fly past the window.

There was a clear frost next day, and soon afterwards came spring,—the trees and flowers budded, the swallows built their nests, the windows were opened, and the little children sat once more in their little garden upon the gutter that ran along the roofs of the houses.

The roses blossomed beautifully that summer, and the little girl had learned a hymn in which there was something about roses; it reminded her of her own. So she sang it to the little boy, and he sang it with her:—

Though roses bloom, then fade away and die,
The Christ-Child's face we yet shall see on high.

And the little ones held each other by the hand, kissed the roses, and looked up at the bright sunshine and talked to themselves as if the Christ-Child were there. What glorious summer days were those! how delightful it was to sit under those rose-trees, which seemed as if they never meant to leave off blossoming!

One day Kay and Gerda were sitting looking at their picture-books full of birds and animals, when just as the clock in the church tower struck twelve, Kay said, "Oh, dear! what a pain I have in my heart!" and soon after, "Oh, something has got into my eye."

The little girl put her arm round his neck and looked into his eye; but there was nothing to be seen.

"I think it is gone," said he; but gone it was not. It was one of those splinters from the Magic Mirror, the wicked glass that made everything great and good appear little and hateful, and that magnified everything ugly and mean. Poor Kay had also got a splinter in his heart. His

heart would now become hard and cold like a lump of ice. He felt the pain no longer, but the splinter was there.

"Why do you cry?" asked he. "You look so ugly when you cry! There is nothing the matter with me. Fie!" he exclaimed again, "this rose is worm-eaten, and this one is crooked. After all, they are ugly roses, and it is an ugly box they grow in!" Then he kicked the box, and tore off the roses.

"Oh, Kay, what are you doing?" cried the little girl. But when he saw how it grieved her, he tore off another rose, and jumped down through his own window, away from his once dear little Gerda.

Ever afterwards, when she brought forward the picture-book, he called it a baby's book; and when his grandmother told stories, he interrupted her with a "but"; and when he could, he would get behind her, put on her spectacles, and mimic her to make people laugh. Very soon he could mimic everybody in the street. All that was singular and awkward about them Kay could imitate, and his neighbours said, "What a boy that is!" But it was the glass splinter in his eye, the glass splinter in his heart, that made him careless whose feelings he wounded, and even made him tease little Gerda.

One winter day Kay came in with thick gloves on his hands and with his sledge at his back. He called to Gerda, "I have got leave to go into the great square where the other boys play!" and away he went.

The boldest boys in the square used to fasten their sledges to the country people's carts, and thus drive a good way along with them. This they thought great fun. Whilst they were playing, a large sledge painted white passed by; in it sat some one wrapped in a rough white fur, and wearing a white cap. When the sledge had driven twice round the square, Kay fastened his little sledge to it, so that when it went away he followed it. On they went, faster and faster, into the next street. The person who drove turned round and nodded kindly to Kay, just as if they had been old acquaintances, and every time Kay was going to loose his little sledge, the driver turned and

noded again. So Kay sat still, and they passed through the gates of the town. Then the snow began to fall so thickly that the little boy could not see a handbreadth before him, but he was still carried on. He tried hastily to unloose the cords and free himself from the large sledge, but it was of no use; his little carriage held fast, and on they flew like the wind. Then he cried out as loud as he could, but no one heard him. The snow fell and the sledge flew; every now and then it made a spring as if driving over hedges and ditches. He was very much frightened; he would have repeated "Our Father," but he could remember nothing but the multiplication table.

The snowflakes seemed larger and larger, till at last they looked like great white fowls. All at once they fell aside, the large sledge stopped, and the person who drove it rose from the seat. Kay saw that the cap and coat were entirely of snow, that it was a lady, tall and slender, and dazzlingly white—it was the Snow Queen!

"We have driven fast!" said she, "but no one likes to be frozen. Creep under my bearskin." And she seated him in the sledge by her side, and spread her cloak around him—he felt as if he were sinking into a drift of snow.

"Are you still cold?" asked she, and then she kissed his brow. Oh! her kiss was colder than ice. It went to his heart, although that was half-frozen already; he thought he should die. It was, however, only for a moment; directly afterwards he was quite well, and no longer felt the intense cold around.

"My sledge! Do not forget my sledge!" He thought first of that. It was fastened to one of the white fowls, which flew behind with it on his back. The Snow Queen kissed Kay again, and he entirely forgot little Gerda, his grandmother, and all at home.

"Now you must have no more kisses!" said she, "else I should kiss thee to death."

Kay looked at her. She was very beautiful; he could not imagine a more intelligent or a more lovely face. She no longer seemed to him made of ice, as when she sat outside the window and beckoned to him. In his eyes she was

perfect; he felt no fear; he told her how well he could reckon in his head as far as fractions, that he knew the number of square miles of every country, and the number of inhabitants in different towns; she always smiled, so then he thought that, after all, he did not yet know so very much. He looked up into the wide, wide space, and she flew with him high up into the black cloud while the storm was raging; it seemed now to Kay to be singing songs of olden time.

They flew over woods and lakes, over sea and land. Beneath them the cold wind whistled, the wolves howled, the snow glittered, and the black crow flew cawing over the plain, whilst above them shone the moon, clear and bright.

Thus did Kay spend the long winter night, and all day he slept at the feet of the Snow Queen.

THE ENCHANTED FLOWER GARDEN

But how fared little Gerda when Kay did not come back? Where could he be? No one knew. The boys said he had tied his sledge to a larger and handsomer one which had driven into the street, and thence through the gate of the town. No one knew where he was, and many were the tears that were shed. Little Gerda wept bitterly for a long time. The boys said he must have been drowned in the river that flowed not far from the town. Oh, how long and dismal those winter days were! At last the spring came with its warm sunshine.

"Alas! Kay is dead and gone," said little Gerda.

"I don't believe it," said the sunshine.

"He is dead and gone," she said to the sparrows.

"We don't believe it," they answered; and at last little Gerda herself did not believe it.

"I will put on my new red shoes," said she one morning, "those that Kay has never seen, and then I will go down to the river and ask after him."

It was quite early. She kissed her old grandmother, who was still sleeping, put on her red shoes, and went alone through the gates of the town towards the river.

"Is it true," said she, "that you have taken my little playfellow away?" she said to the river. "I will give you my red shoes if you will give him back to me!"

And the waves of the river seemed to nod to her in a strange way. So she took off her red shoes, which she liked better than anything else she had, and threw them into the stream; but the little waves bore them back to her, as if they would not take from her what she loved most when they could not give her back little Kay. But she thought she had not thrown the shoes far enough out, so she stepped into a little boat that lay among the reeds, and, standing at the farthest end of it, threw them again into the water. The boat was not fastened, and her movements sent it gliding away from the shore. She saw this, and hastened to the other end of the boat, but when she reached it she could not get out for it was more than a yard from the land, and was gliding farther and farther away.

Little Gerda was much frightened and began to cry, but no one save the sparrows heard her, and they could not carry her back to the land; however, they flew along the banks, and sang, as if to comfort her, "Here we are, here we are!" The boat floated with the stream.

"Perhaps the river will carry me to Kay," thought Gerda, and then she became more cheerful, and amused herself for hours looking at the lovely country around her. At last she glided past a large cherry garden, wherein stood a little cottage with thatched roof and curious red and blue windows. Two wooden soldiers stood at the door, who presented arms as she floated past. Gerda called to them, thinking that they were alive, but of course they made no answer. She came close to them, for the stream drifted the boat to the land; and then Gerda called still louder, and an old lady came out of the house, leaning on a crutch. She wore a large hat, with beautiful flowers painted on it.

"Poor little child!" said the old woman; "what a long way the quick rolling stream has carried you!" And then she walked into the water, seized the boat with her crutch, drew it to land, and lifted the little girl out.

Gerda was glad to be on dry land again, although she was a little afraid of the strange old woman.

"Come and tell me who you are, and how you came here," said she.

Gerda told her all, and the old woman shook her head, and said, "Hem! hem!" And when Gerda asked if she had seen little Kay, the old woman said that he had not come yet, but that he would be sure to come soon, and that in the meantime Gerda must not be sad; that she might stay with her, and eat the cherries and look at the flowers, which were prettier than any picture-book, for each could tell a story.

Then she took Gerda by the hand, and they went together into the cottage, and the old woman shut the door. The windows were very high, and as the panes were red, blue, and yellow, the daylight shone through them in all sorts of various and beautiful colours. Upon a table in the centre was a plate of very fine cherries, and of these Gerda was allowed to eat as many as she liked. While she was eating them, the old dame combed her hair with a golden comb, and the bright flaxen ringlets fell on each side of her pretty, gentle face, which looked as fresh and blooming as a rose.

"I have long wished for such a dear little girl," said the old woman. "We shall see now if we cannot live very happily together." And, as she combed little Gerda's hair, the child thought less and less of Kay, for the old woman was an enchantress, though not a wicked one. She did not practise magic for mischief, but merely for amusement, and now because she wished very much to keep little Gerda. So, fearing that if Gerda saw her roses she would think of those at home and of little Kay, and might run away, she went out into the garden, and stretched her crutch over all the rose-bushes, upon which, although they were full of leaves and blossoms, they immediately sank into the dark earth.

Then she led Gerda into this flower-garden. Every flower of every season of the year was there in full bloom, no picture-book could compare with it. Gerda jumped for joy, and played among the flowers till the sun set behind the tall cherry-trees. Then a pretty little bed, with crimson

a large stone, and when she looked round her she saw that the summer was past, that it was now late in the autumn. She had known nothing of this when she was in the garden, where there were sunshine and flowers all the year round.

"How long I must have stayed there!" said little Gerda. "It is autumn now! There is no time to lose!" And she rose up to go on.

Oh, how sore and weary were her little feet! And all around looked so cold and bleak. The long willow-leaves had already turned yellow, and the dew trickled down from them like water. Leaf after leaf fell from the trees; the sloe alone bore fruit, and its berries were sharp and bitter. Oh, how cold, and grey, and sad the world seemed!

THE PRINCE AND THE PRINCESS

Gerda was again obliged to rest. Suddenly a large raven hopped upon the snow in front of her, saying, "Caw! — Caw! — Good-day! — Good-day!" He sat for some time on the withered branch of a tree opposite, eyeing the little maiden, and wagging his head; and now he came forward to make acquaintance and to ask her whither she was going all alone. Gerda told the raven her story and asked if he had seen Kay.

And the raven nodded his head, half doubtfully, and said, "I may. It is possible."

"Do you think you have?" cried the little girl, and she kissed the raven, and in her joy almost hugged him to death.

"Gently, gently!" said the raven. "I think I know. I think it may be little Kay; but he has certainly forsaken you for the Princess."

"Does he dwell with a princess?" asked Gerda.

"Listen to me," said the raven; "but it is so difficult to speak your language! If you understand raven speech, then I can explain things so much better. Do you?"

"No! I have never learned it," said Gerda; "but my grandmother knew it, and used to speak it to me. Oh, how I wish I had learned it!"

"Never mind," said the raven, "I will tell my story as well as I can"; and he told her all he had heard.

"In the kingdom wherein we now are sitting, there lives a Princess so clever that she has read all the newspapers of the world, and forgotten them too. Not long ago she was sitting on her throne and began to sing a new song, the burden of which was, 'Why should I not marry?' 'Why not, indeed?' said she, and she determined to marry if she could find a man who knew what to say when people spoke to him, and not one who could only look grand, for that was tiresome. So she called her ladies together and told them what she meant to do. 'We are glad to hear it,' said they, 'we were talking about it only the other morning.' You may believe that every word I say is true," continued the raven, "for I have a tame sweetheart who hops freely about the palace, and she told me all this.

"Proclamations with borders of hearts and the initials of the Princess were immediately issued. They gave notice that every well-favoured youth was free to go to the palace, and that he who could talk best with the Princess and show himself most at home would be the one the Princess would choose for her husband.

"You may believe what I say," said the raven. "It is as true as I sit here.

"The folks came in crowds; but it was no use. The young men could speak well enough while they were outside the palace gates, but when they entered, and saw the royal guard in silver uniform, and the lackeys on the staircase in gold, and the spacious saloon, all lighted up, they became quite confused. They stood before the throne where the Princess sat, and when she spoke to them they could only repeat the last word she had said. It was just as if they had been struck dumb the moment they entered the palace, for as soon as they got out they could talk fast enough. There was quite a long line of them reaching from the gates of the town to the palace."

"But Kay, little Kay, when did he come?" asked Gerda. "Was he among the crowd?"

"Presently, presently; we are just coming to him. On

the third day there came a youth with neither horse nor carriage. He marched gaily up to the palace. His eyes sparkled like yours. He had long beautiful hair, but his clothes were very shabby."

"That was Kay!" said Gerda joyfully. "Oh, then I have found him!" and she clapped her hands.

"He carried a knapsack on his back," said the raven.

"No, not a knapsack," said Gerda, "a sledge, for he had a sledge with him when he left home."

"It is possible," answered the raven, "I did not look very closely. But I heard from my sweetheart, that when he entered the palace gates and saw the royal guard in silver, and the lackeys in gold upon the staircase, he did not seem in the least confused, but nodded pleasantly and said to them, 'It must be very tedious standing out here; I prefer to go in.' The rooms were blazing with light. Ministers and ambassadors were walking about bare-footed carrying golden vessels; enough to make a man solemn and silent. His boots creaked horribly, yet he was not at all afraid."

"That most certainly was Kay!" said Gerda; "I know he had new boots; I have heard them creak in my grandmother's room."

"They really did creak," said the raven; "but he went boldly up to the Princess, who was sitting upon a pearl as large as a spinning-wheel, whilst all the ladies of the court, with the maids of honour and their handmaidens, stood on one side, and all the gentlemen in waiting, with their gentlemen, and their gentlemen's gentlemen, who also kept pages, stood on the other side, and the nearer they were to the door the prouder they looked."

"It must have been quite awful," said Gerda. "Did Kay win the Princess?"

"The young man spoke as well as I do myself when I use the raven tongue," said the bird. "At least my sweetheart said so. He was quite lively and agreeable. 'He did not come to woo her,' he said, 'he had only come to hear her wisdom.' And he liked her much, and she liked him in return."

"Yes, to be sure, that was Kay," said Gerda. "He was so clever, he could reckon in his head, even fractions! Oh, will you not take me into the palace?"

"Ah! that is easily said," replied the raven, "but how is it to be done? I will talk it over with my sweetheart, and ask her advice. It is no easy thing, I may tell you, to get permission for a little girl like you to enter the palace."

"Oh, but I shall get permission easily!" cried Gerda. "When Kay knows that I am here, he will come out at once and fetch me."

"Wait for me at the trellis yonder," said the raven, wagging his head as he flew away.

The raven did not return till late in the evening. "Caw, caw," said he. "My sweetheart greets you kindly, and sends you this piece of bread which she took from the kitchen; there is plenty of bread there, and she thinks you must be hungry. As you have bare feet, the royal guard in silver uniform, and the lackeys in gold, would never let you enter the palace; but do not weep, you shall go there. My sweetheart knows a little back staircase leading to the sleeping apartments, and where to find the key."

So they went into the garden, and down the grand avenue, and, when the lights in the palace one by one had all been put out, the raven led Gerda to a back-door that stood half open. Oh, how Gerda's heart beat with fear and longing! It was just as if she were doing something wrong, yet she only wished to know if Kay really was there. She would see if his smile were the same as it used to be when they sat together under the rose-trees. He would be so glad to see her, to hear how far she had come for his sake, and how sorry all at home were when he did not come back. Her heart trembled with fear and joy.

They went up the stairs. A lamp was burning in a small closet at the top; and in the middle of the floor stood the tame raven, who first turned her head on all sides, and then looked at Gerda, who made her curtsy, as her grandmother had taught her to do.

"My betrothed has told me a great deal about-you, little maiden," said the tame raven. "Your adventures are

extremely interesting! If you will take the lamp, I will show you the way. We will go straight along this way, and we shall meet no one."

They now entered the first hall. Its walls were covered with rose-coloured satin, embroidered with gold flowers. Here the Dreams flitted past so rapidly that Gerda could not make them out. Each room they passed through seemed more splendid than the last. At length they reached the sleeping-hall. In the centre of this room stood a pillar of gold like the stem of a large palm-tree whose leaves of costly crystal made the ceiling; and from the tree hung, near the door, on thick golden stalks two beds in the form of lilies. One was white, and in it lay the Princess. The other was red, and in this Gerda sought her playfellow, Kay. She bent aside one of the red leaves and saw a little brown neck. Oh, it must be Kay! She called his name, and held the lamp over him. The Dreams rushed back into the room on horseback. He awoke, turned his head, and behold! it was not Kay.

The Princess looked out from her white lily bed, and asked what was the matter. Then little Gerda wept, and told her story, and what the ravens had done to help her. "Poor child!" said the Prince and Princess; and they praised the ravens, and said they were not at all angry with them for what they had done. Such a thing must never happen again, but this time they should be rewarded.

"Would you like to have your freedom?" asked the Princess, "or to become Court-Ravens with the right to all that is left in the royal kitchen?"

And both the ravens bowed low and chose the appointment at court, for they thought of their old age, and said it would be so comfortable to be well provided for in their declining years. Then the Prince rose and made Gerda sleep in his bed.

The next day she was dressed from head to foot in silk and velvet, and she was invited to stay at the palace and enjoy herself; but she begged only for a little carriage and a horse, and a pair of boots. All she desired was to go again into the wide world to seek Kay.

They gave her the boots and also a muff. And as soon as she was ready, there drove up to the door a new carriage of pure gold with the arms of the Prince and Princess glittering upon it like a star, and the coachman, the footman, and outriders, all wearing gold crowns. The Prince and Princess themselves helped her into the carriage and wished her success. The wood-raven, who was now married, went with her the first three miles. The carriage was well provided with sugar-plums, fruit, and gingerbread nuts.

"Farewell! farewell!" cried the Prince and Princess; and little Gerda wept, and the raven wept out of sympathy. Then he flew up to the branch of a tree and flapped his black wings at the carriage till it was out of sight.

THE LITTLE ROBBER-MAIDEN

They drove through the dark forest, and the carriage shone like a torch. Unluckily its brightness attracted the notice of some forest robbers, who could not bear to let it pass without plundering it.

"It is gold! it is gold!" they cried; and then they rushed forward, seized the horses, stabbed the outriders, coachman, and footman to death, and dragged little Gerda out of the carriage.

"She is plump, she is pretty, she has been fed on nut-kernels," said the old robber-wife, who had a long, bristly beard, and eyebrows hanging like bushes over her eyes. "She is like a little fat lamb. How nice she will taste!" and saying this, she drew out her bright dagger which glittered most terribly.

"Oh, oh!" shrieked the woman—for at the very moment she had lifted her dagger to stab Gerda, her own wild daughter jumped upon her back and bit her ear violently—"you naughty child!"

"She shall play with me," said the little robber-maiden. "She shall give me her muff and her pretty frock, and sleep with me in my bed!" And then she bit her mother again, till the robber-wife sprang up and shrieked with pain, and

all the robbers laughed, saying, "See how she is playing with her cub!"

The little robber-maiden was a spoilt child, and always had her own way; and she and Gerda sat in the carriage, and drove farther and farther into the wood. She was about as tall as Gerda, but much stronger; she had broad shoulders, and a very dark skin; her eyes were quite black, and she had a sad look. She put her arm round Gerda's waist, and said, "She shall not kill you so long as I love you! Are you not a princess?"

"No!" said Gerda; and then she told her all that had happened to her, and how much she loved little Kay.

The robber-maiden looked earnestly in her face, shook her head, and said, "She shall not kill you even if I do quarrel with you; then, indeed, I would rather do it myself!" And she dried Gerda's tears, and put both her hands into the pretty muff that was so soft and warm.

The carriage at last stopped in the courtyard of the robbers' castle. This castle was half ruined; crows and ravens flew out of the holes in it, and large bulldogs, looking as if they could devour a man in a moment, jumped round the carriage. They did not bark, for that was forbidden.

The maidens entered a large smoky hall, where a big fire was blazing on the stone floor. A large cauldron full of soup was boiling over the fire, and hares and rabbits were roasting on the spit.

"You shall sleep with me and my little pets to-night," said the robber-maiden. Then they had some food, and afterwards went to the corner where lay straw and a piece of carpet. More than a hundred pigeons were perched on staves and laths around them; who all seemed to be asleep, but were startled when the little maidens drew near.

"These all belong to me," said the robber-maiden, and seizing hold of the nearest she held the poor bird by the feet and swung it till it flapped its wings. "Kiss it," said she, flapping it into Gerda's face. "The wood-pigeons sit up there," continued she, pointing to a number of laths and a cage fixed across a hole in the wall; "they would fly away if I did not keep them shut up. And here is my old

favourite!" and she pulled forward by the horn a reindeer who wore a bright copper ring round his neck, and was tied to a large stone. "We are obliged to chain him up, or he would run away from us. Every evening I tickle his neck with my sharp dagger; it makes him fear me so much!" And then the robber-maiden drew out a long dagger from a chink in the wall and passed it over the reindeer's throat. The poor animal struggled and kicked; but the girl laughed, and then she pulled Gerda into bed with her.

"Will you keep the dagger in your hand whilst you sleep?" asked Gerda, looking very much afraid.

"I always sleep with my dagger by my side," replied the little robber-maiden. "One never knows what may happen. But now tell me all over again what you told me before about Kay, and why you came into the wide world all by yourself."

Gerda told her story over again, and the wood-pigeons above cooed, but the others slept. The little robber-maiden threw one arm round Gerda's neck, and holding the dagger with the other, was soon fast asleep; but Gerda could not close her eyes for she did not know what would become of her, or whether the robbers would let her live. The robbers sat round the fire drinking and singing. Oh, it was a dreadful night for the poor little girl!

Then the wood-pigeons said, "Coo, coo, coo! we have seen little Kay. A white fowl carried his sledge, and he sat in the Snow Queen's chariot, which drove through the wood while we sat in our nest. She breathed upon us as she passed, and all the young ones died excepting us two,—coo, coo, coo!"

"What are you saying?" cried Gerda. "Where was the Snow Queen going? Do you know anything about it?"

"She travelled most likely to Lapland, where there is always ice and snow. Ask the reindeer bound to the rope up there."

"Yes, there is always ice and snow there; it is a glorious land!" said the reindeer. "There, free and happy, one can roam through the wide sparkling valleys! There the

Snow Queen has her summer-tent ; but her strong castle is near the North Pole, on the island called Spitzbergen."

"O Kay, dear Kay!" sighed Gerda.

When morning came Gerda told her what the wood-pigeons had said, and the little robber-maiden looked grave and nodded her head. "Do you know where Lapland is?" she asked of the reindeer.

"Who should know better?" said the animal, his eyes sparkling. "There was I born and bred; and there I used to bound over the wild, icy plains!"

"Listen to me!" said the robber-maiden. "You see all our men are gone, but my mother is still here, and here she will remain. At noon she will drink out of the great flask, and after that she will sleep a little—then I will do something for you!"

When her mother was fast asleep, the robber-maiden went to the reindeer and said, "I should very much like to tickle your neck a few more times with my sharp dagger, for then you do look so droll; but never mind, I will untie your cord and let you go free, on condition that you run as fast as you can to Lapland, and take this little girl to the castle of the Snow Queen, where her playfellow is. You must have heard her story, for she speaks loud enough, and you know how to listen."

The reindeer jumped for joy, and the robber-maiden lifted Gerda on his back, taking care to bind her on firmly, as well as to give her a little cushion to sit on. "And here," said she, "are your fur boots. You will need them for it will be very cold. The muff I must keep; it is so pretty. But you shall not be frozen for want of it, for here are my mother's big gloves; they reach up to the elbow. Put them on. Now your hands look as clumsy as my old mother's!"

Gerda shed tears of joy.

"I cannot bear to see you crying!" said the little robber-maiden. "You ought to look glad. See, here are two loaves and a piece of bacon for you, so that you may not be hungry on the way." She fastened these on the reindeer's back, opened the door, called away the great dogs,

and then, cutting with her dagger the rope which bound the reindeer, shouted to him, "Now then, run! but take good care of the little girl."

Gerda stretched out her hands to the robber-maiden and bade her farewell, and the reindeer bounded through the forest, over stock and stone, over desert and heath, over meadow and moor. The wolves howled and the ravens shrieked. "Isch! Isch!" a red light flashed—one might have fancied the sky was sneezing.

"Those are my dear old Northern lights!" said the reindeer. "See, how beautiful they are!" And he ran on night and day faster than ever; but the loaves were eaten and so was the bacon when at last they came to Lapland.

THE LAPLAND WOMAN AND THE FINLAND WOMAN

They stopped at a little hut. A wretched hut it was; the roof nearly touched the ground, and the door was so low that whoever wished to go in or out had to crawl upon hands and knees. No one was at home except an old Lapland woman who was busy boiling fish over a lamp. The reindeer told her Gerda's whole history—not, however, till after he had told her his own, which seemed to him of much more importance. Poor Gerda was so pinched with the cold that she could not speak.

"Poor thing!" said the Lapland woman, "you have still a long way to go! You have a hundred miles to run before you can reach Finland. The Snow Queen lives there now and burns blue lights every night. I will write for you a few words on a piece of dried stock-fish—paper I have none—and you may take it with you to the wise Finland woman who lives there; she will advise you better than I can."

So when Gerda was warmed, and had taken some food, the Lapland woman wrote a few words on a dried stock-fish and bade Gerda take care of it; she bound her once more firmly on the reindeer's back, and away they went at full speed.

The beautiful blue Northern lights shone all through

the night, and at length they reached Finland, and knocked at the chimney of the wise woman's hut for there was no door above ground.

They crept in, but it was very hot within; so hot that the wise woman wore scarcely any clothes. She was small and very dirty looking. She loosened little Gerda's dress, took off her fur boots and thick gloves, laid a piece of ice on the reindeer's head, and then read what was written on the stock-fish. She read it three times. After the third reading she knew it by heart, so she threw the fish into the porridge-pot, for she knew it was good to eat, and she never wasted anything.

The reindeer then told his own story first, and then little Gerda's, and the wise woman twinkled her wise eyes but spoke not a word.

"Will you not mix for this little maiden that wonderful draught which will give her the strength of twelve men, and so make her able to overcome the Snow Queen?" said the reindeer.

"The strength of twelve men!" said the wise woman; "that would not be of much use!" And she walked away, drew forth a large parchment roll from a shelf, and began to read. She read till the perspiration ran down her forehead.

At last her eyes began to twinkle again; and she drew the reindeer into a corner, and putting a fresh piece of ice upon his head, whispered: "Little Kay is still with the Snow Queen, and he finds everything so much to his taste that he thinks it the best place in the world. But that is because he has a glass splinter in his heart and a glass splinter in his eye. Until he has got rid of them he will never feel like a human being, and the Snow Queen will always have power over him."

"But can you not give something to little Gerda to help her to conquer this evil power?" asked the reindeer.

"I can give her no power so great as she has already," answered the woman. "Her power is greater than ours, because it comes from a pure and loving heart. If with this she cannot gain access to the Snow Queen's palace and

free Kay's eye and heart from the glass splinters, we can do nothing for her! Two miles from here is the Snow Queen's garden; you can carry the little maiden there, and put her down close by the bush bearing red berries and half covered with snow. Don't waste time gossiping, and hasten back as fast as you can." Then the wise woman lifted Gerda on the reindeer's back, and away they went.

"Oh, I have left my boots and my gloves behind!" cried little Gerda, when she felt the biting cold; but the reindeer dared not stop; on he ran until he reached the bush with the red berries. Here he set Gerda down and kissed her, while the tears rolled down his cheeks. Then he ran fast back again—which was the best thing he could do. And there stood poor Gerda, without shoes, without gloves, alone in that dreary, desolate, ice-bound Finland.

She ran forward as fast as she could, and a whole regiment of snowflakes came to meet her. They did not fall from the sky, which was cloudless and bright with the Northern lights; they ran straight along the ground, and the farther Gerda advanced the larger they grew. Gerda then remembered how large and curious the snowflakes had appeared to her when one day she had looked at them through a burning-glass. These, however, were very much larger and much more terrible, for they were alive. They were, in fact, the Snow Queen's guards, and their shapes were the strangest you could think of. Some looked like great ugly porcupines, others like snakes rolled into knots with their heads stretching out, and others like little fat bears with bristling hair; but all were dazzlingly white, and all were living snowflakes. Little Gerda began to repeat the Lord's Prayer, and it was so cold that she could see her own breath coming out of her mouth like steam as she spoke the words. The steam seemed to grow thicker as she kept on praying, and at length it took the shape of little bright angels which, as they touched the earth, became larger and more distinct. They wore helmets on their heads, and carried shields and spears. Their number increased so quickly that, by the time Gerda had finished her prayer, a whole legion stood round her. They thrust

their spears into the horrible snowflakes, which broke into thousands of pieces, and little Gerda walked on unhurt and unafraid. The angels touched her hands and feet, and then she scarcely felt the cold, and went on boldly to the Snow Queen's palace.

But before we go farther with her, let us see what Kay is doing. He is certainly not thinking of little Gerda, and least of all can he imagine that she is now standing at the palace gate.

THE SNOW QUEEN'S PALACE

The walls of the palace were formed of the drifted snow, its doors and windows of the cutting winds. There were more than a hundred rooms in the palace, the largest of them many miles in length. They were all lit up by the Northern lights, and were all alike vast, empty, icily cold, and dazzlingly white. In the midst of the empty endless hall of snow lay a frozen lake; it was broken into a thousand pieces, each piece so exactly like the others that the breaking of them might well be deemed a work of more than human skill. The Snow Queen, when at home, always sat in the middle of this lake.

Little Kay was quite blue, nay, almost black with cold, but he did not feel it, for the Snow Queen had kissed away the shiverings and his heart was already a lump of ice. He was busied among the sharp icy fragments, laying and joining them together in every possible way, just as people do with what are called Chinese puzzles. Kay could form the most curious and complete figures—and in his eyes they were of the utmost importance. He often formed whole words, but there was one word he could never succeed in forming—it was Eternity. The Snow Queen said to him, "When you can put that together, you shall be your own master and I will give you the whole world, and a new pair of skates besides." But he could never do it.

"Now I am going to the warmer countries," said the Snow Queen. "I shall flit through the air, and look into the black craters, as they are called, of Etna and Vesuvius. I shall whiten them a little. That will be good for the lemons and

the vines." So away flew the Snow Queen, leaving Kay sitting all alone in the large empty hall of ice.

He looked at the pieces of ice and thought and thought till his head ached. He sat so still and so stiff that one might have thought that he too was frozen.

Cold and cutting blew the winds when little Gerda passed through the palace gates ; but she repeated her evening prayer, and they at once sank to rest. She entered the large empty hall and saw Kay. She knew him at once. She flew to him and fell upon his neck, and held him fast, and cried, "Kay ! dear, dear Kay ! I have found you at last !"

But he sat still, quite stiff and cold and motionless. His unkindness wounded poor Gerda. She wept bitterly and her hot tears fell on his breast and thawed the ice, and penetrated to his heart and washed out the splinter of glass. He looked at her whilst she sang—

Though roses bloom, then fade away and die,
The Christ-Child's face we yet shall see on high.

Then Kay burst into tears. He wept till the glass splinter floated in his eye and fell with his tears. Then he knew his old companion, and cried with joy, "Gerda, my dear little Gerda, where have you been all this time?—and where have I been?"

He looked around him. "How cold it is here ! how wide and empty !" Then he embraced Gerda, and she laughed and wept by turns. Even the pieces of ice took part in their joy ; they danced about merrily, and when they were wearied and lay down they formed of their own accord the letters of which the Snow Queen had said that when Kay could put them together he should be his own master, and that she would give him the whole world, with a new pair of skates besides.

And Gerda kissed his cheeks, and they became fresh and glowing as ever. She kissed his eyes, and they sparkled like her own. She kissed his hands and feet, and he was once more healthy and merry. The Snow Queen might now come home as soon as she liked—it mattered not ; Kay's charter of freedom stood written on the lake in bright icy characters.

They took each other by the hand, and went forth out of the ice palace; and as they walked on, the winds were hushed into a calm, and the sun burst forth in splendour from among the dark storm-clouds. When they got to the bush with the red berries, they found the reindeer standing by waiting for them; and he had brought with him another and younger reindeer, whose udders were full, and who gladly gave her warm milk to refresh the young travellers.

The old reindeer and the young hind carried Kay and Gerda on their backs, first to the little hot room of the wise woman of Finland, where they warmed themselves, and received advice about their journey home, and afterwards to the home of the Lapland woman, who made them some new clothes and provided them with a sledge.

The whole party ran on together till they came to the boundary of the country; and just where the green leaves began to sprout, the Lapland woman and the two reindeers took their leave. "Farewell! farewell!" said they all. And the birds, the first they had seen for many a long day, began to chirp their pretty songs; and the trees of the forest were covered with variously tinted green leaves. Suddenly the boughs parted, and a spirited horse galloped up. Gerda knew it, for it was one which had drawn her gold coach. On it sat a young girl wearing a bright scarlet cap, and with pistols on the holster before her. It was the robber-maiden, who, weary of her home in the forest, was going on her travels, first to the North and afterwards to other parts of the world. She knew Gerda at once, and Gerda had not forgotten her. Most joyful was their greeting.

"A fine gentleman you are, to be sure, you graceless young truant!" said she to Kay. "I should like to know if you deserved that any one should be running to the end of the world on your account!"

But Gerda patted her cheeks, and asked after the Prince and Princess.

"They are gone to foreign countries," replied the robber-maiden.

"And the raven?" asked Gerda.

"Ah! the raven is dead," answered she. "His sweetheart is now a widow, so she hops about with a piece of black worsted round her leg; she moans most piteously, and chatters more than ever! But tell me now how you managed to get back your old playfellow."

And Gerda and Kay told their story.

"Snip-snap-snurre-basselurre!" said the robber-maiden. Then she took the hands of both, and promised that if ever she passed through their town she would pay them a visit; and then she bade them farewell, and rode away out into the wide world.

Then Kay and Gerda walked on hand in hand, and wherever they went it was spring, beautiful spring, with its bright flowers and green leaves.

They came to a large town, where the church bells were ringing merrily, and they knew at once the high towers rising into the sky, for it was the town wherein they had lived. Joyfully they passed through the streets, and stopped at the door of Gerda's grandmother. They walked up the stairs and entered the well-known room. The clock said "Tick, tick!" and the hands moved as before. Only one change could they find, and that was in themselves, for they saw that they were now both grown up. The rose-trees on the roof blossomed in front of the open window, and there beneath them stood the children's stools. Kay and Gerda went and sat down upon them, still holding each other by the hand. The cold, hollow splendour of the Snow Queen's palace they had forgotten; it seemed to them only an unpleasant dream. The grandmother meanwhile sat in the bright sunshine, and read from the Bible these words: "Unless ye become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

And Kay and Gerda gazed on each other; they now understood the words of their hymn—

Though roses bloom, then fade away and die,
The Christ-Child's face we yet shall see on high.